



**THE AUTHOR**  
**CAPTAIN D'AUVERGNE,**  
**M C D C M**

# Zindari

A DAUGHTER OF THE  
INDIAN FRONTIER  
AND OTHER  
THRILLING TALES  
OF THE  
INDIAN FRONTIER

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*"Reminiscences of Romance and Adventure by an old Army Officer whose duty took him among the wild and lawless Tribes of the Mountain Ranges during the greater part of a long and adventurous life"*

BY  
Capt. V. d'AUVERGNE, M.C., D.C.M.

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TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS

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# PREFACE

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CAPTAIN D'AUVERGNE, the author of this delightful book of short stories, has spent the greater part of a long and adventurous life among those tribes of the North where daring, courage and a brave spirit are the natural growth of the wind-swept hills, the life of which is so little known to the outside world.

The stories told are based on fact

The author's idea in putting these stories into book form is not with the idea of profit but to give entertainment to those who have the spirit of adventure and love of travel.

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# ZINDARI

## A DAUGHTER OF THE INDIAN FRONTIER

THE *Mehtar* (Ruler) of Chitral had lately been assassinated and Shere Afzul, a pretender to the *gadi* (throne), had raised his clans and entered into an agreement with Umra Khan, the Jandoli Chieftain, and as a guarantee of good faith, delivered into his hands a hundred Chitralis—men, women, boys and girls—as hostages for his assistance in his forthcoming struggle, but their combined forces—thirty thousand strong—were defeated by our troops in fine hard-fought battles during the never-to-be-forgotten “Relief of Chitral in 1895,” both chieftains taken prisoners and deported to India. The hostages having been released, were to be sent back to their homes in the valleys of Chitral and Lutkho. I was deputed to take charge and with a small escort of a dozen Gurkha sepoys, look after them generally during the trying journey from Mundia Khan in Bajaur, through Dir and over the blizzard-swept Lawari Pass, 13,000 feet high.

One evening, cold, hungry and miserable, we arrived in a storm of sleet and rain, at a place called Mirga at the foot of the dreaded Pass. The only shelter to be found was a big, dilapidated, wooden building that had been built many years previously by the then Khan of Dir, for the use of the traders and their ponies, passing to and from the Chitral Valley.

About 8 p.m. on my visit of inspection for the night, I noticed through the opening that served as a door, the

light of a bright fire shining out on the snow I was pleased to note that the poor people had managed to collect firewood and made themselves comfortable Glancing inside, I was considerably surprised at the scene within The wild, motley crowd of men and women, some sitting on the ground and others standing around a fire of logs burning in the middle of the big shed, and all intently listening to what, at first, I took to be some kind of religious exhortation by a tall and venerable old grey-beard who, standing at the far side of the fire facing the opening and leaning on a long staff, was vehemently declaiming upon his subject, whatever it might have been

The red glow of the fire-light throwing into strong relief the wild and motley scene, the strong, bearded faces of the men and the silent intensity of the women, it was a scene most truly Rembrandtesque

At his left and slightly behind the old Mullah, as I considered him, there stood the figure of a woman, wearing the pointed felt cap of the Badakhshans and with a soft veil of some kind around the bottom of her face In one of his exalted efforts, the Mullah inadvertently swept his left arm outwards, with the result that the woman's cap and veil were displaced, whereby was disclosed—instead of that of a woman, the face of a young girl

And just here, my story begins in real earnest The girl catching up her gear and re-arranging it, further exposed her features brought to life by action It was the face of a young girl of about seventeen years of age Well—I am an old man now and there are but few countries in the world that I have not wandered through, but nowhere, or *ever* have I seen a face of such strange, wild beauty Two and forty years have passed since then, but the haunting

beauty of that face is as fresh in my memory now, as it was on that fateful night on the snow-clad slopes of the terrible Lawari Pass

Elsewhere, I have written the full story of that beautiful child of the mountains and the strange adventures that fate forced her into

I quietly entered the shed and stood in the shadows behind the others, more interested in the girl, I must confess, than in the subject of the old man's discourse which, when I did succeed in dragging my mind to it, rather surprised me, and somewhat unpleasantly

It was not religion at all, but a bitter and violent declamation against Christianity in general, and the British in particular

The gist of his theme was that the British had taken their country with the intention of destroying their sacred faith, forcing the people to renounce their religion as Mohamadans and become Christians He said he had been advised of this by the Mullah Shuanda of Haraphore—whose sanctity, wisdom and saintliness were of the most holy and whose word it would be sacrilege to doubt So forceful, vivid and fiery were his words that his listeners were not only strongly affected but seemed to be growing excited

Knowing from past experience the danger that could arise from such inflammatory preaching when such audiences become excited, I resolved to put an end to the old boy's eloquence, so, pushing my way through the people I faced the old Mullah across the fire and in a few sharp words told him he was either a fool for talking such nonsense or more likely a paid agitator, in addition to being a liar, for there

was no such person in existence as a "Mullah Shuanda of Haraghpore," sacred or otherwise

He remained staring at me for a minute with a murderous look in his venomous old eyes and was about to burst forth in a torrent of invective when there was a movement behind him and a tall, hook-nosed individual pushed his way to the front, and in a rasping guttural began talking

"What the *syid* says is quite true and I am in a position to prove it I was in Haraghpore—"

"Stop," I shouted "Tell me in which province of Afghanistan is Haraghpore?"

"Why, of course," he replied, "it is in Yusifzai"

"Which, my friend," I said, "proves you to be a liar also You were never there Haraghpore is not in Afghanistan at all but far away down in Central India"

By this fellow's accent in speaking Chitrali I recognized at once that he was not of that country but was evidently a Bajauri Pathan, and what the—was he doing among the hostages?

He now began to bluster, but I had had enough of the situation I beckoned to the two armed sepoys outside to enter, and pointing to "hook-nose" ordered them to remove him and keep him under arrest for the night, then turning to the old man advised him to close his foolish sermon and go to rest, so that "you will be able to cross the Pass next night"

While this little scene was being enacted, the girl by the side of the old man kept her eyes steadily fixed on me in such a manner as to cause me annoyance, for some reason

which even to this day I could not explain, then grasping the old man's arm she insisted on dragging him away to some corner of the shack out of sight

Next day was cold and foggy, but the rain and sleet had stopped and by evening it had cleared up completely, giving signs of hard frost which was what was most desired, for it would give a crisp firmness to the snow on the Pass, making the passage less difficult

About dusk, preparations for the start were begun. Everyone attended to his or her own packing, showing activity, excitement and some little confusion

While interestedly watching the business, I caught sight of the old man seated on a bundle while the girl close by was engaged in tying up another bundle of some kind, the tall "hook-nosed" man trying to help her, but without any satisfactory result, for the simple reason that she would have none of him and showed every sign of annoyance and aversion towards his endeavours, in fact, his interference was an obstruction and caused delay

I thought it time to check the man, and speaking to him in Pukhtu—for I felt sure he was a Pathan—told him to leave the shed. He pretended not to understand and replied in Chitrali, but I was not deceived and had him turned out by the Gurkha havildar, at the same time ordering him to be kept under surveillance for the future. That gentleman played a very leading part later on

About 9 o'clock the moon came up and four of the escort, leading the party, started the climb from Mirga. When all had left I hitched the reins of my horse—a beautiful chestnut Arab—to a loose board at the door of the shed, and seeing that the fire was still alight, I sat by it while having something to eat, after which, possibly through the quiet

of the night and the warmth of the fire, I fell asleep, from which I was awakened by the nickering and stamping of my horse at the door. I had no watch, but noticing the position of the moon I must have slept for over an hour. Quickly mounting, I followed the track of our party up the Pass, but as it was impossible to travel at more than walking pace, I had not come in sight of our rear guard before midnight, by which time I calculated I was about half way to the top, but the bright moonlight on the snow made vision deceptive. It was then that I seemed to hear, faint and far away, coming from across the snow waste, what sounded like a muffled cry or call of some kind. My horse must have heard it also, for he pricked up his ears and looked off to the left of the trail. I halted for a minute or so to listen and was not mistaken, for again in the silence of the night came the sound—clearly the voice of someone in distress who had probably strayed from the party and was lost in the dreary waste of snow.

I dismounted, and leaving my horse in the track with his reins hitched back to the saddle, began to plough my way over the snow in the direction from which came the mournful cry. At a distance of about four hundred yards from the trail, my astonishment may be imagined when turning round a snowdrift I came suddenly on the tragic group of the grey-bearded Mullah lying on his back with his white head held on the young girl's knees.

He was babbling in Persian still on the subject of *Kafars* and *unbelievers*. It did not take long to understand that whatever the situation might portend, he was near his end.

When I spoke to him he opened his eyes wide, and staring up at me for a moment whispered "*Ar—dost—nijde bi—a—binshih*" (Ho, friend, come close to me, sit down)

Thinking that he had something he wished to confide to me, I knelt down by his side and bent over to listen, when suddenly he seemed to gather strength, for he raised his face towards mine, but instead of speaking—*he spat in my face*, and with the sound of gurgling laughter, fell back dead!

I gathered a handful of snow with which to rub my face, and remained kneeling there for a few moments staring down into the face of the old man, which in death held the unmistakable stamp of unquenchable hate

Well, he was dead, and a good thing too, but what to do next! The girl did not seem to realize that she held the head of a dead man on her knees, for she continued passing her fingers through his white hairs and speaking to him in Persian

"Oh! *Apuya* (grandfather), you must not die and leave me, you are the only one in all the world that I love, as you so well know! My father and mother and all are gone, I will be alone forever and at the mercy of the wicked people who are everywhere"—and so on she whimpered, crying and sobbing for five or ten minutes It had to be stopped, so touching her gently on the shoulder and speaking in the same language, I tried to console her and sympathize, but she took no notice

I lifted the body and placed it at the bottom of the snowdrift, and with my hands raked down the snow over it until it was completely covered, during which time she sat still and silent, then turning to her I told her that we must be on our way She got up, but instead of coming with me she stumbled towards the mound that hid the body, and throwing herself on it began with her hands to tear

away the snow, at the same time calling on her grandfather not to leave her

I felt annoyed. The night was passing, it was bitterly cold, and I failed to find any sentiment in the situation I could not leave the girl there to die of cold or be attacked by wolves or other wild animals, plenty of which were about, so without further hesitation, but speaking kindly, I proceeded to raise her in my arms, with the intention of helping or leading her away from the desolate place, but she tore herself away and suddenly drew a dagger from the *kumma-band* or waist scarf under her Chogha and raised it above her breast with the full intention of stabbing herself. Before the blade could descend, I grabbed her arm and after a struggle managed to wrest it from her, but in doing so received a nasty stab on my left arm, for she fought like a wild cat. This did not tend to create any friendly feeling between us and as I had no desire to waste any more time, I picked her up in my arms and started back to where my horse was standing in the track. She still fought, kicked and scratched, and even buried her sharp teeth in my wrist, so that our way through the deep snow was a succession of ridiculous tumbles. At last I was forced to hold her face downwards, kneeling on her while I undid the leather lanyard from my revolver and tied her hands behind her, and then lifted her over my shoulders. That settled her. She suddenly grew quiet and in a small voice asked me to let her walk by herself.

I was not sorry to agree, and as she appeared to be very weak I linked my arm in hers, and in this way came to the trail.

After promising to be quiet I untied her hands and made her sit on the snow-bank by the trail while I fished

out of my saddle wallets a flask of rum and water, and telling her that it was a certain medicine against fever, contracted from cold and exposure, I got her to drink some

As she sat there so desolate and sobbing quietly in a heart-broken way I felt very sorry for her indeed. Sitting beside her, I spoke kindly and tried to console her for her loss while chafing her hands that were like pieces of ice. The little stimulant I got her to take seemed to have been beneficial, for by degrees her sobbing grew less, and when I told her that we might make a start and try to catch up with the remainder of the party she said she was ready to go "wherever I wished." She made a tottering move to stand up, but it was evident she was quite unable to walk. When I asked her if she could ride, she replied in the affirmative. I lifted her into the saddle and fixed her feet into the stirrup leathers, then handing her the reins told her to let the Arab take his own pace. She protested that it was not right for her to ride while I walked, but I preferred to walk as my feet were frozen. The girl now gradually began to talk (it appeared that the old man fearing me, tried to escape into Asmar by a way known to him) and by the time we reached the head of the Pass I was acquainted with her history and that of her people, who were not of Chitral but from Paghman-deh in northern Badukhshan, which accounted for their knowledge of Persian. She and her grandfather were in Kila Drassim, when they, with many others, were seized by the followers of Shere Afzul and handed over to the Jandoli Chieftain as hostages. They were taken through the Chitral Valley, over the Lowari Pass, and detained in Mundia, until all the fighting was over.

They were not well fed or housed, but otherwise suffered no harm. She also told me of the "Afghani" as

she called the "hook-nosed" Bajauri Pathan—who was constantly annoying her and who tried to persuade her to leave her grandfather and go away with him, but she despised and hated him as "*harami*" (treacherous), and in fact she had threatened several times to kill him. She had no idea who he was or from where he came, nor had she seen him until a month before leaving Mundia when she found him attached to her party as a Chitrali—which she knew he was not, nor was he one of the hostages. She had spoken about him to her grandfather, but he was very old and would do nothing, saying simply, "Oh, take no notice."

The northern descent of the Pass being too steep to ride down, I helped her to dismount, giving her whatever assistance I could, as we, after many slidings and tumbles in the snow, managed to scramble the remaining two miles down to *Ziarat*. The amusing and ridiculous situations born of our difficulties while trying to walk in deep snow down two miles of steep mountain side with a gradient of about *one in three*, kept my companion's mind, to a certain extent, from her recent trouble. In fact by the time—just before daybreak—we got into touch with the others, her trust and confidence in me seemed to have gained a firm foundation, and to show that I trusted her I returned her dagger. I ascertained that her name was Zindari.

Among the hostages, I found a nice old couple with one girl of their own, who were on friendly terms with her and her grandfather, and handed her over to them, after explaining about the old man's death. They were most kind and promised faithfully to look after her as their own daughter, until they reached their homes.

The old man's name was Azim Beg from the village of Rogad on the borders of *Lutkho*.

Our next day's march was all down-hill until we came to Ashhreth, where, during the night of our camping there, we had a somewhat exciting and a most unpleasant experience

Our camp—nothing but flimsy shelters made of shrubs, branches of trees and *wadi* grass, collected and strung together by the Chitrals—adepts at the business—on arrival, was situated for the most part, and for the sake of shelter, in the ravine, while some, including myself and my horse, established ourselves further away among the rocks

Our party having cooked their food retired to their shelters for the night

Somewhere about 10 o'clock as I started on my visiting rounds as usual—just to satisfy myself that all was well—a furious storm of wind and rain accompanied with a crackling, splintering species of thunder and blinding flashes of lightning, broke over us, so that in a very few minutes our shelters were reduced to wisps of sodden litter. In one sense the storm proved to be a blessing in disguise as the sequel will show

Everyone was now wandering about seeking for a little shelter among the rocks, when there arose a sound like the roar of waters from somewhere among the hills above us. The sound quickly grew louder and louder until at last from high up there appeared, as could easily be seen in the lightning flashes, a mighty wall of tumbling water rushing down the ravine, carrying on its crest uprooted and broken trees and great masses of tangled vegetation of all kinds, while the heavy, dull thudding of rocks being carried down suggested the muffled sound of big guns afar off, but the storm with all its concomitants was not the worst of our

misfortunes as will be seen My first concern was my Arab, on whom I had just secured a waterproof sheet, and having made sure that he was all right, I was making my way back to the ravine to see if I could help, when I heard yells from half a dozen directions "*Biye!* *Biye!*" (snakes! snakes!) Failing to understand, I continued on my way, waiting every few paces for the lightning flashes, that I might see my road, as between them the darkness was intense, but the next flash gave me all the explanation I needed, for three yards in front of me there squirmed no less than three big snakes measuring four to six feet in length I quickly jumped off in another direction, and then waited for the next flash not seeing any more, I ran towards the place where I knew Azim Beg had fixed his shelter, which was unfortunately in the ravine, and called his name in as loud a voice as the storm would permit I waited for another flash of lightning in which, when it came, I caught sight of a figure staggering towards me It was the girl, Zindari Thinking of the snakes, I caught hold of her, lifted her from the ground and helped her on to a big rock close by that I had marked for myself in case of more snakes sliding about

I quickly climbed up after her and then sat holding her there as I saw that she was just about all in After a rest of a few minutes she said that Azim Beg, having quickly grasped the nature of the storm, had hustled everyone about him up the side of the ravine clear of the rushing water. From where we crouched on our rock we could see with every flash of lightning that the ground was literally swarming with snakes of all lengths, from eighteen inches to six and seven feet long, that crawled and looked like glistening ropes that slid, twisted and untwisted into and out of slimy coils that was enough to make us forget our wet clothing, cold and misery of the storm Every now and again a piercing

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scream that came to us down the wind, informed us of some poor wretch's misfortune of being bitten

We had not been on the rock more than a few minutes when, our excitement abated, I suddenly thought of my horse. Clutching the girl round the shoulders I yelled: "My horse! You stay here! Do not move! I will come back soon," and thrusting my revolver into her hands, not waiting for any comment from her, I slid off the rock and, trusting to the protection of my long boots, dashed off to where the Arab was picketed, feeling several times under my feet the soft, pulpy body of a snake that it was impossible to avoid and a couple of times a twisting loop dragged for a moment but, with my hair on end, I dashed along until I came to the horse. In a second I had torn from the ground the peg that held the head-stall, and throwing myself on his back galloped off towards and across the small river or mountain stream that ran from the hills into the Chitral River—quarter of a mile distant from our shattered and snake-infested camp. There I left him tied and in safety high up among the pines, and wading the river, hurried back to the rock, ignoring the beastly snakes and trusting to luck not to get bitten.

When about two hundred yards from the rock I was startled by the sound of a shot from that direction, a little further on, still at a run, I came into collision with someone bigger and heavier than I and found myself rolling through a puddle of slush with my skin creeping, not from the tumble but from fear of the snakes. When somewhere near the rock, for which I was making, I called to the girl, who at once replied, not from high up on the rock where I had left her but from somewhere near its base. I quickly hustled her up again, and once more safely on top I asked her the meaning of the shot and why had she got down.

She said that in a flash of lightning she saw the figure of a man trying to climb up to where she was. She knew it was not myself, but had a conviction that it was the Afghan. He would not reply when she spoke asking who he was. Being suspicious of him, she did not hesitate but fired at him in the dark, then thinking that he might succeed in seizing her she nimbly slid down the other side of the rock. She did not know if the man had been hit, but thought not as she heard someone running away. It must have been the man who cannoned into me.

It was bitterly cold and in her thin, wet clothes I felt the girl shivering as if with the ague. The only thing I could do was to pull off my coat and wrap it about her, as some small protection.

There was nothing more we could possibly do until daylight. The storm died down about 1 o'clock, but fear of the snakes compelled us to stay where we were.

To pass the miserable time I engaged Zindari in conversation about herself and her experiences. She seemed to have travelled considerably with her parents, through Sinkiam, Afghanistan and the Usbeg country, before they were killed by the Kafirs.

On matters concerning the Frontiers she was quite a fund of information. Regarding the *sarab* or mountain spate, she explained that up in the hills there were at times colonies of snakes in the deep ravines. When a big spate burst, the colonies were washed down to scatter through the lower *nullahs*, from where they sought other hiding places wherever possible, but would soon swarm again.

When daylight came the scene that presented itself was not one to delight in. For a beginning, there were dozens of dead and dying snakes scattered over the whole area of our camp, but the remainder seemed to have taken themselves off, and in addition three men and a young girl dead, with a dozen people ill through bites. These were attended to the best way we could—I, by crude application of Per Mag of Potash and the Chitrals by some herb treatment of their own, in which Zindari showed herself as a most capable nurse. Three more died but the others recovered slowly.

My first thought was for my Arab. With one of my Gurkhas I went after him and was very pleased that he was quite safe and well. I now enquired from the Havildar about the Pathan I had placed in his charge. Evidently he had taken advantage of the storm and all its attendant excitement, and made himself scarce. He was not to be found, for which I was glad. When I informed Zindari she said there was nothing to be glad about, as she was sure he would come again, and it was best to be watchful always.

As it was, she was sorry that she had missed him last night in the dark, which she certainly would not do in daylight. Bravo for her!

However, matters might have been worse, so we had to make the best of it.

About mid-day, after everyone had collected their scattered belongings and managed to get some food, we started for Sthera—fifteen miles distant and situated near the junction of the Warodhi and Chitral Rivers.

We made camp five hundred yards from the village, quite sufficiently convenient for those needing supplies.

After paying my usual round of visits and in company with Azim Beg and Zindari, gave what care we could to those who were ill from snake bite and the severity of the storm, I returned to my own bivouac, and having seen to my horse was preparing to turn in, when a boy—one of our party—brought me a note scrawled in Persian on a piece of cloth with what I afterwards ascertained, a thorn dipped in radzi juice “Your honour—The Afghan is in the village—Zindari” Of course the girl meant her objectionable Bajauri acquaintance An hour later when it was dark I paid a visit to Azim Beg's *pannah* (shelter of branches and *wadi* grass)

It appears that his wife and daughter had been to the village for necessaries and caught sight of the fellow who had been following, somewhat disguised as to his dress, but both mother and daughter knew him well Being well acquainted with the rascality of the Bajauris, I warned our Gurkha guards to be extra careful and permit no stranger or suspicious person near the camp during the night and made special mention of the man who deserted, who called himself Murad

It would be about 1 o'clock that I was awakened by the sounds of shooting I was on my feet in a moment, and catching up my revolver ran in the direction from which the sounds came I was informed that some men were seen running away from the camp

As it was dark and raining heavily the sentries could not see clearly, but understanding that it was something irregular, they opened fire as the men ran in different directions Running towards Azim Beg's shelter I found himself, his wife and his daughter lying gagged and bound The girl, Zindari, was nowhere to be found The whole

camp was searched, but no trace of her in camp. With every man of my guard I raided the village and literally turned the place inside out, but all to no purpose. I felt pretty raw about it, and blamed myself for not taking more precaution, knowing what I did of the situation. I *must* do something—but where or how to begin? Wracking my brains over the matter and cursing the sepoys for not doing their duty better, I slowly wandered back towards my shelter, and on arriving there, found more trouble awaiting me, and trouble of such a nature that all the swear words I had learned in the army were too weak and incapable of easing my feelings. My horse with its saddle and bridle was gone! My faithful Arab that was my friend and companion in many a stiff campaign! I just sat on the rock close by, numb and collapsed.

And all this trouble on account of a girl! I could have wished all girls—oh, what's the good? They always were, and always will be to the end of time. I sent half a dozen men into the village to make enquiries and, if no information could be gained, to hire a horse that would carry me to Chitral itself. Well, no one knew anything of my Arab. I did not expect they would, *knowing the Frontier as I did*, but I managed to get a really good horse.

As it appeared that nothing else could be done, I gave orders to march at about 7 a.m., but when on the point of starting, the same lad that brought me the message from Zindari the evening before came running to say that my horse was quietly grazing at some distance.

Accompanied by the boy, it did not take me long to get to the place and was overjoyed to get my arms around the neck of my dear old friend again. The reins were dragging, he was covered in sweat and grime and scratched

all over with thorns, which clearly indicated that he had broken away from whoever had ridden him and returned to me

As I mentioned before, it had been raining during the night and the marks of the horse's feet were clear enough in the soft earth for anyone to follow, and to follow them I was resolved, no matter to where they might lead

I accordingly gave orders to the Havildar to start the party on to the next camp, where he was to await my arrival for two days, and if I did not return by the third night he was to proceed to Fort Chitral and report accordingly to the O C

After giving the horse a rub down, which he badly needed, and a feed of grain, I rearranged the saddle and bridle and mounted, then with the boy running alongside for a short distance to help to pick up the horse's tracks, after which I instructed him to remain in the village with the hired horse and await my return, I started off at a canter along the trail that led in the direction of the Pass. For a couple of hours we travelled where the trail, leading into the pine forest at the foot-hills, then slanted off to the right and up the hill towards the border line between Asmar and Kafirstan

In this direction we travelled for an hour or so—at one point it led towards a dense tangle of scrub and stunted trees. My horse suddenly stopped and with set ears sniffed and showed reluctance to enter it. I dismounted, and revolver in hand crept around the tangle. To say that I was astonished at what I saw would be mild in the extreme, for lying on his back with his eyes wide open staring up into the firs, and as dead as mutton, was my friend, the Bajauri

The cause of his death was plain for all the world to see—a knife thrust through the throat and another through the heart

That he was dead was quite sufficient for me. How he died did not concern me in the least, but what worried me was what had become of the girl. I stood looking about for some sign or foot-marks, but there was no chance of finding any in the rough underbush. Thinking that it would be the Bajauri's intention to cross into Asmar, I climbed upwards in that direction for a few hundred yards, when something drew my attention towards a low line of rocks to the right. Behind the rocks I found the dead body of another man with an empty rifle under him. He was shot between the eyes. As he was in the usual Bajauri dress, I counted him as a friend of the other—and I was right.

Still standing by the body, I was looking about for something to give me a line on the situation when something did indicate it—the sound of a shot from a towering mass of rocks forty feet above. Naturally it drew my attention there, but what I saw explained the meaning of the shot. It was the waving of a cloth for a moment and then the lithe figure of Zindari springing down the rocks with a pistol in her hand, until she stood by my side with a smile in her eyes, though her face showed pale and drawn. I was so overjoyed to see her that I could not help taking her in my arms and kissing her.

On my asking her, she assured me that she had not been hurt in any manner, but through fatigue and hunger she was not feeling quite well.

"Come," I said. "There is no time to waste and this place seems a trifle unhealthy. You must have some food

and rest as soon as possible" I led the way to where the horse was quietly nibbling the grass As it was necessary to travel fast I took her up in front of me on the saddle and started on the return journey to Sthera, where on arriving I insisted that after having some food she should sleep as long as possible

It was during our journey to Sthera that Zindari told me of her abduction and the incident leading to her escape and the death of the two men

It appears that while asleep in the shelter with the family of Azim Beg, she was rudely awakened by finding her head and body muffled up in a rough blanket and being carried away by some men who spoke hurriedly in the Bajauri tongue—Pukhtu She struggled and tried to shout, but to no purpose She felt herself being lifted up and caught by a man on horseback who kept her tightly in front of him in the saddle as the horse galloped away, while she heard the sound of shooting, though half smothered by the thick blanket about her head

Continuing her story in her soft Persian "I quickly realized the situation, that the treacherous Afghani was my abductor As quietly as possible I turned my hand under the blanket to where my dagger—that I was never without—waking or sleeping—was hidden inside my *shawa*, close to my left side, and the grasp of the hilt gave me courage We seemed to travel for a long distance, but I knew that we must stop somewhere sometime, and developed my plan as we rode

"At last the horse was pulled up, on hearing a man's voice as he shouted from some distance He spoke in Pukhtu and I did not understand My captor dismounted,





THE DAUGHTER OF THE FRONTIER ASSERTS HERSELF

To Face Page 29

and lifting me down from the horse began to free me from the folds of the blanket. There was the opportunity I waited for. While both his hands were busy with the blanket, I struck and buried my dagger in his breast. For a moment he stood with a look of surprise in his evil eyes, and before he could recover from his astonishment I struck again, and this time through the throat. Clawing with his hands he took a step towards me, then staggered and fell to his knees. Being worked up with hate of the brute and thinking of the abduction, I was so mad with passion and the feeling of revenge, that, losing control of myself, as he knelt there I sprang and stabbed him again. Then snatching from his *kammer* (waist cloth) the pistol I saw there, I ran to where I last saw the horse, but it was gone. I then ran through the jungle and climbing up to where I saw a mass of rocks, hid there watching for who might come. In a few minutes I saw a man coming, he was carrying a gun over his shoulder. When he came to the dead Afghan he stood looking at him for a minute, then looked about, and all around. At last he saw the rocks among which I was hiding. Evidently he knew I was there, for he began to climb up through the jungle until he was close under the rocks, where he stood and called out something in Pukhtu that I did not understand.

"I did not trust him at all for he had the same evil eyes as the other, so I shot him with the Afghan's pistol. He did not speak or cry out as he fell, so I knew he was dead, but still I remained hidden where I was, for I had a feeling that you would come yourself or send someone to help me.

"Then, Master, I waited many hours thinking that perhaps some more of the Afghan's friends might come, but I was not afraid as long as I had the pistol which I knew

well how to use and my own dagger At last I saw you coming and I was glad I fired a shot in the air to draw your attention, and that is all I am glad the Afghani is dead ”

Next morning we left Sthera for Kila Droah, Zindari riding the hired horse and the boy ambling alongside The distance was but eighteen miles, so we did not hurry, but jogged along talking of many things She was very interested as to how long I intended to remain in the valley, where I would live and what duty I would be employed upon now that I had finished with the hostages, and many other things all about myself

Nothing of consequence occurred either in Kila Droah or Broz, and on the fourth day we reached Fort Chitral where our party was joyously welcomed by friends and relations and led away to their several homes

The Malik of the little village of Duneen (good old Assan Khan!) immediately the other side of the river from the Fort, took Azim Beg's family, which included Zindari, into his own house, where they were made welcome for as long as they would stay

Having made my official report to the Political Authorities, my responsibilities ceased and I was at liberty to put in a few days' shooting among the hills along the Kafiristan border

I remained in Chitral for ten days during which time I paid several visits to Assan Khan's little village, and I was pleased to see that Zindari was comfortable enough, but I could not help seeing that there was a note of discontent in her moods Thinking she still mourned the death of

her grandfather, I tried once or twice to express my sympathy but found myself wrong somehow, for she turned away impatiently, remarking, "Oh, I am all right, and—well—never mind!"

Taking into consideration the incidents that led to our acquaintance, the recent unusual happening and—in fact—the present peculiar situation, it would be strange if my interest in her and her future would be but of a casual nature, so I considered it only right to do what I could towards coming to some arrangement with the authorities connected with the new Chitral Government and the new *Mehtar* (Ruler) that the British had put on the throne, but when I mentioned this to Zindari, she thanked me, but in doing so I could not but observe the frown that shadowed her sweet face and the disturbed thought in her beautiful eyes. At last the date of my departure was at hand and I was to leave Chitral next morning on my return to Chakdara.

About sundown I was saying "good-bye" to Zindari—as we stood under the broken turret at the north-end of the old swing bridge over the Chitral River. After some minutes silence the girl spoke

"Master, I quite recognize the fact that you have saved my life and my honour—for, of course, you are not aware that our *korn* (family)—well, never mind, we will not talk of *that* now—and for that not only my heartfelt gratitude but my life is yours to do with as you will. That is just between you and I, but as to Chitral and its people, I will not have any intercourse whatsoever. I will accept no favour from them and all I want now is to get back to my own country. I am well aware that your feelings for me are of the most kind and that you are worried as to my future, so to set your mind at rest I will now let you know

my intentions I am in a position to greatly benefit Azim Beg and his family, who have promised to travel with me to Paghman-deh in Northern Badakhshan, where on arrival we will meet the people of my *kora*, my father's relations and friends, of which there are many. There—all will be well. So now, Master,—with the blessing of Allah go in peace. Farewell!"

She turned and slowly walked towards the village

But as I remarked in the beginning of this brief story, there is much more to the astounding history of Zindari.

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## AMONG THE HEAD-HUNTERS IN LUSHAI-LAND

OME time about the end of 1899, the Government of India considered it necessary to send a small Military Force into Lushai-Land—one of the "States" on the North East Frontier of India. It appeared that persistent "border-raiding," "head-hunting" and "girl-snatching" expeditions by the *Kukis* or *Nagas*—the people of Lushai—into Manipur on the east and Tipperah on the west somewhat annoyed those States. They became alarmed and asked the Government for assistance, hence the expedition.

There were certain features connected with this little campaign that caused it to differ in most respects from our well-known campaigns on the North Western Frontiers.

For instance, the country was of such a nature that transport animals of any kind such as mules, bullocks, ponies, donkeys or camels beyond a place called Burkhal were impossible, and only elephants as far as there.

As my job was the "Army Transport" such as the animals I have just mentioned and which we always use on the North West Frontier, I felt considerably nonplussed when I received orders to collect, equip and organize a corps of three hundred carriers or porters for service with an expedition into Lushai-Land.

Being stationed at Nowshera at the time, I set to work at once and soon succeeded in raising a mixed corps of Frontier *Pathans* and *Panjabis*, and a more unruly crowd couldn't be found in all India but a fine hardy lot of scamps that would be—and were—very useful as fighters when we happened to get into a tight place.

Calcutta is where we had to sail from, but a fine lot of trouble I had trying to keep them out of mischief during that long railway journey from the north—it started the grey in my hair—for, at every station we stopped, big or little, there was a fight or two through looting the fruit and sweet-meat sellers, or complaints from the passengers of being hustled from their carriages, by *gentlemen* wanting “plenty of room”

In Calcutta I had to bail twenty of the rascals out of the lock-up, as seeing the wonderful display of wealth in the big city they could not resist their acquisitive little propensities so common to their own Northern Borders

The ship in which we sailed—the property of some Marwaris—could hardly be called a “record breaker” as it took us four days to reach Chittagong. As none of my fellows had ever been to sea before, they were for the most part of the voyage lying about the decks very sea-sick, especially as the weather was bad and the old hulk rolled, pitched and tossed as if enjoying the situation. At any rate it was the most peaceful spell I had since I collected my corps. They were too sick to quarrel or to get up to any other mischief

Arriving in Chittagong, we were received by the Transport Superintendent, who being in an excitable state on account of his marriage that afternoon to a rich, highly-coloured Chittagonian, told us to “go to the— and look after ourselves” We didn’t go quite so close to—but we looked after ourselves alright, in fact we did very well—but I must disclaim any personal action in the operation—at the expense of the bazaar shop-keepers

We departed next day by river steamer for Rangamutti, cheerfully indifferent to what the Transport Officer might

have to say when the shop-keepers presented their bills to him—as recommended by my men. But by then we had chartered a flotilla of "country boats" and worked our way up river past Burkhal and landed at Dimagree, the "base depot" where we were received by Capt Bond and Mr Ferguson of the A S Corps and learned that mine was the first of eight "carrier corps" that were intended to do all the transport work of the expedition.

It was extremely disagreeable for many who were accustomed to the saddle, but from the Brigadier down to the coolie, everyone had to walk, as riding of any kind was impossible owing to the dense and pathless jungles of bamboo hills, rivers and swamps.

After a day's rest I started off with three hundred "coolie loads" of stores for a small force that had already marched and expected to reach our "advance post" at Lungleh in a week's time.

Being a cavalry man, I was not used to walking, and the feeling of a new pair of ammunition boots did not offer any comfort in a fifteen-mile tramp.

Arriving in Lungleh, we found ourselves in the country of the *Kukis* and *Nagas* who were longing to collect some of our heads to stick up on long bamboo poles as village decorations.

The country, north, through which we were to go was a reeking tangle of dank jungle without roads or paths of any kind other than some tracks such as are made by wild animals of which there certainly were an abundance, and as the mode of warfare peculiar to the Lushais or *Kukis* seems to have evolved from the silent, creeping and invisible attacks of the animals, it behove us to keep "well up" and close to the troops.

Four days' struggle through those steaming jungles brought us into contact with the *Nagas* who treated us to a flight of poisoned arrows from out of the forest, while our advance guard, with rifles slung, were hacking a path through a dense canebrake

We were all previously warned of the danger of those poisoned arrows and were supplied with plenty of potassium permanganate and a small lancet each, whereby we could treat such wounds as were not serious. As our men opened fire into the jungle the *Kukis* didn't wait to deliver another flight, but silently disappeared. It was all chance shooting, for not a man of the enemy could be seen. Half a mile further on we broke out of the jungle into a clearing beside the river—a branch of the Kolondyne—and were saluted with a ragged volley of gun-fire from a stockade close down by the water at a distance of about two hundred yards

A company of the Frontier Force Gurkhas re-entered the forest and, opening out, worked their way in half circles round the stockade, and from the cover of the jungle on two sides opened a brisk fire on it. The *Kukis* after some more wild shooting—from what we guessed to be old Remingtons—and yelling defiance, quickly scuttled down to the river, into which they dived like rats, and being clever swimmers, were soon lost in the forest on the other side. They were tricky rascals and knew better than to face us in the open. We took possession of the stockade in which we found three dead and six wounded. They were all totally naked. We went into camp there for two days until reinforced by another regiment from Lungleh, and another "carrier corps," with supplies. The late arrivals took over the stockade while we made another advance

The work of hacking our way through the jungle was heart-breaking. Every man of the force was armed with

a heavy kookri which was ever in hand slashing and cutting tangled roots, lianas, cane and bamboo that impeded our progress at every step. Our clothing was saturated with the cloying steam and stench emanating from the dead vegetation, in addition to which the clouds of mosquitoes were simply maddening. All tempers were frayed to such an extent that civil words to each other were not heard.

After two more days of this we came upon another stockade, well built and strong but unoccupied even by the picturesque collection of human heads that usually adorn the entrance gates. We did not take possession of it as some kind of trap was suspected, and so it was, for it contained no less than fifteen tiger pits well studded with sharpened stakes at the bottom and nicely curved over with a *farash* of dust and leaves that did not show the least difference from the surrounding ground.

From here our mode of progress towards the village of Thanrooma was—thanks to an old Gurkha havildar—of a kind that pleased my carriers and myself very much for it. It saved the labour of *carrying* the stores and me from the trouble of walking. He showed us how to make big rafts with the giant bamboos that grow so abundantly along the bank of the river. My fellows got to work at once and by next day had fifty rafts on the river, each capable of carrying the loads of ten men with two of my carriers, poling, and one Gurkha sepoy with loaded rifle keeping a sharp lookout on both sides of the river, as the *Nagas*—keeping under cover of the jungle along the bank—used our rafts as targets for their arrows and Remingtons. We now made quicker and easier progress notwithstanding the many mishaps, such as collisions in the rapids, bamboo lashings coming adrift, men tumbling into the river and a hundred other accidents common to such a venture.

In this manner we travelled for four days, always getting to our camp sites or "stockade"—as we called it—before the troops. Three more days of river work, then all were to leave it to cross a range of small hills that lay between ourselves and the big fortified village of Thanrooma that was our objective.

We were sorry to change the coolness of the river for the sweltering heat of the dank jungle.

In a country like that, I could well understand and even appreciate the habit of the inhabitants running about in the nude—I often wished to do so myself, and I was not alone in my wish.

Next day our Brigadier resolved to attack the big village that was found to be a more difficult job than anticipated. As we did not have any Mountain guns with us we had to depend on our rifle-fire for distance fighting which in this case was useless, as the village stockade was strong and well able to resist, it had to be the bayonet, but when orders were given for attack it was found that the whole hill-side on which the village was situated was, for hundreds of yards in every direction, planted with *caltrops*—those devilish spike cones that forced our men to pick their way carefully and slowly as the poisoned spikes would very soon put them out of action, and during this slow advance the enemy within the stockade, notwithstanding our covering fire, kept up a brisk fire that accounted for a number of our men that we could ill spare. It was dark by the time we had reached the stockade and placed a charge of gun-cotton against the gates that were promptly blown in and set on fire. The Gurkhas were quickly inside and for the next half-hour that village presented such a weird scene that might well be thought an inferno.

The whole village and stockade being made entirely of wood, was soon a flaming holocaust through which could be seen and heard the crack of rifles, the flashing of sword, bayonet and kookri, the gleam of flying spears, the vengeful yells and screams of maddened men as they in hundreds chased each other in and out, up and down through lanes of blazing houses nor was it men only that were the actors in the drama of blood and flame, for it appeared that all the domestic live-stock got free, pigs, goats, gyles and fowl of all kinds, and terrified by the flames, were in hundreds dashing madly about among the fighting men Fortunately there were no children or women The *Nagas* were sensible enough to send all away to hide in the forest until the trouble was over

After close on an hour's fighting, the *Nagas* fled in disorder, leaving over a hundred killed and wounded

By daybreak next morning there were some lively and amusing doings all about the burned village The Gurkhas and our carriers combined in a hilarious hunt after the live-stock that still hung about the place The Gurkhas with fixed bayonets chasing the pigs that dodged and jerked in their endeavours to escape the steel, while my *Pathans* and *Panjabis* with kookries in hand chased the goats and fowls—all a scene of laughter, shouting and excitement, the grim doings of the night before apparently forgotten

Everyone had plenty to eat for some days We remained there for the next three days and then took up our march again towards Limpunga—another big stockaded village—three days' journey off

At one of our encampments a Sergeant Butler of the supply corps took his gun, about three o'clock in the afternoon, and went out in the forest on a chance of getting a few jungle fowl for dinner About one hour later, shots in

quick succession could be heard in a certain direction. Half a dozen of us sensing that there was something unusual happening out there, grabbed our revolvers and dashed off towards the sound of firing, and arrived in time to witness a little drama that would make a wonderful scene for a film.

At the angle of a narrow ledge of rock passing two sides of a cliff, Butler was standing with his back to the cliff. The ledge on which he stood was but two feet wide, while in front yawned a chasm a hundred feet deep. He was being attacked by about two dozen naked *Nagas* that evidently tried to get at him from both sides along the ledge, but as only one at a time could approach he was in a nice position to defend himself with a barrel to the left and one to the right, of No 4 shot. Six of them had already got their medicine and pitched down into the chasm, a couple were sitting to one side trying to rub small shot out of their eyes when we came round the corner and took a hand in the game.

In camp that evening Butler—known as “Big Jim” on account of his six feet six inches and eighteen stone—was the hero and royally feted by everyone to such an extent, that he became considerably elevated, and in returning to his *basha* mistook the Brigadier’s camp-bed for his own, which was unfortunate for the bed, and for himself also, for the Brigadier was annoyed and Butler’s name was *not* mentioned in despatches.

We found that the village of Limpunga was also situated on a hill-top, but although surrounded by a strong stockade and in the usual manner decorated with heads—the house of the head-man, or *raffa*, having quite an ornamental setting of bare skulls—there did not appear to be any sign of hostility, on the contrary, at the bottom of the hill on

the site of an old village we were met by about a dozen elderly men who, through our interpreter, welcomed us with gifts of fowls, eggs, a goat and two small, fat pigs. This was all very nice. We camped at the bottom of the hill and proceeded to make ourselves comfortable in the empty *bashas* of dried bamboo and wood, while the Brigadier with his staff and a small escort ascended the hill to inspect Limpunga. They found only peace and harmony with women and children going about their business as usual. They returned later and all settled down for the night.

I shared a *basha* with two other fellows—one was a man by name Bowden who was the envied possessor of a large and eternal thirst undoubtedly cultivated in his tea-planting days before he became a soldier. About three o'clock in the morning I awoke choking with the fumes of burning bamboo, and found our *basha* on fire. The only articles of my kit I had time to rescue were my belts and arms. It appeared that Bowden having gone to bed quite tipsy waked up during the night for another drink from a bottle he kept standing in his long boot, after which he dropped a lighted match between the dry interstices of the bamboo floor while trying to light his pipe, and in a minute everything was blazing.

I heard a padre once say that in "every misfortune there is some divine intention" and in this misfortune—wherein three of us lost our kit—there certainly *was*, for the blazing *basha* lighting up the surroundings served to show our outlying sentries the near approach of a horde of armed *Nagas*. The alarm given, the regiment was soon under arms, and in the light of the still blazing *basha* the *Nagas* were welcomed at a distance of two hundred yards with a couple of thousand rounds of "Martin Henry" bullets.

They only stopped to give us a couple of flights of arrows and a ragged volley of gas-pipe guns that did no harm—and then scattered into the jungle in every direction

On entering Limpunga, when day came, it was empty even to the goats, pigs and *all* the heads

We occupied that village for a month, our carriers, with myself, and two others, going back for fresh supplies and doing the convoy work by stages

We had another young fellow—Lieut Walton of the sappers—on the expedition, who was a keen shikari and would go out alone with his gun whenever he got a chance, although warned of the danger not only from the *Nagas* but from the tigers that were plentiful in the jungles

One day, as I was returning to No 3 stockade with my corps of carriers to pick up a convoy of supplies, young Walton joined me with his gun and dressed for the jungle, saying he would come with us a mile or so on the look-out for jungle fowl I returned two days later, and the first news I heard was that as Walton did not return as he had promised, a search party was sent out, but no trace of him was found Ten days later when returning with another convoy we met a very old *Naga* coming along the track supporting himself by a long bamboo and carrying under his arm something wrapped up in plantain leaves He slowly put down the bundle and sat pointing to it, then to the jungle behind him, and kept on gabbling something that no one understood, but when the bundle was opened we understood alright It was a long boot easily to be recognized as one of the pair that Walton wore the last time I saw him The old fellow did not seem to mind the stench that came from the boot, but held it up proudly for us to see that inside was the putrid remains of a human leg

The old *Naga* kept on repeating the word " *tsa* " which we all understood as *salt* He wanted some salt as payment for bringing us the boot and the information that poor Walton fell to the tigers

In Lushai-Land salt is recognized as the most precious commodity in the country and the *sequia* of commercial exchange For fifty pounds of salt you would buy a cow, twenty-five would purchase a wife, two pounds a pig and a goat—and so forth you might recognize a man who is well off by the little sack of salt he carried under his arm by a bamboo plaited string over his shoulder and into which he would stick his finger every little while and indulge in a lick of salt

Our next advance was still north towards Februn with the line of march for the troops ever through the malarial forest, but whenever the route brought the Column near the river I would arrange for the easier carrying of supplies by rafting

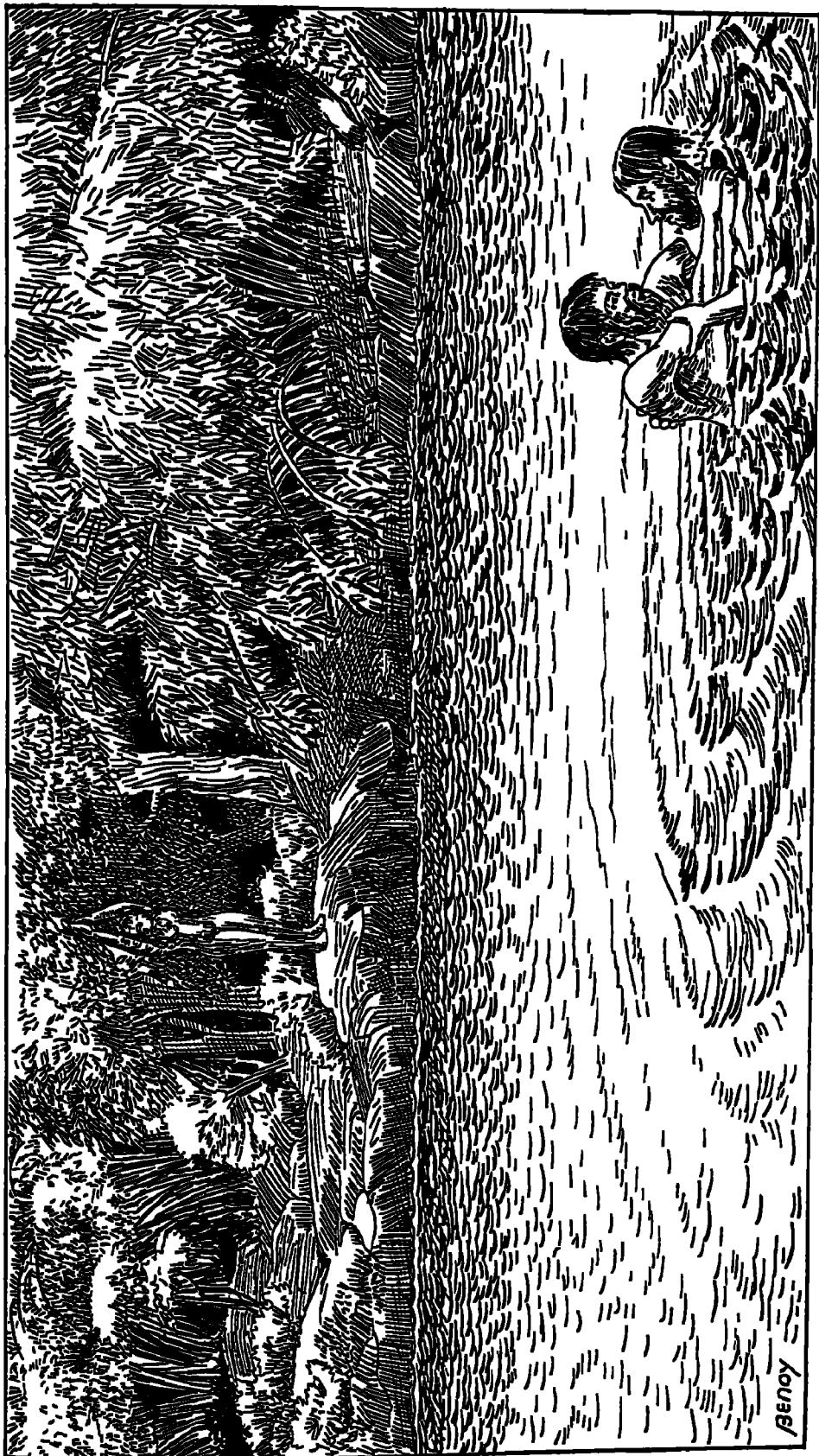
This work was certainly difficult and dangerous, but a hundred times more preferable than the forest marching that was torture

On breaking out of the jungle, our first job was to cut down a few thousand big bamboos and lash them together with bamboo *peel* in the shape of a broad arrow on which a cross platform of split bamboos was constructed On that platform our stores were piled and secured by ropes twisted out of the same kind of *peel* that was delicately stripped from the bamboo by a clever method of using a sharp knife, but this work was done by *Kuki* women who were a great assistance in the construction of those rafts, and as to how this came about the little story might be interesting

One hot and steamy afternoon we broke out of the forest and came to the river again. Stores were piled, and after a rest the carriers got to work making rafts. Bowden, Moore and I were superintending the business for some time. Getting tired of it, I stripped and went in for a swim. The other two sat on the bank watching and smoking.

After a while I saw Bowden—who by the way was much older than either of us—stripped and entered the water carrying a five-foot section of hollow bamboo, some eight inches in diameter. He was not a swimmer and the bamboo was intended as a support. He paddled about for sometime until a yell from Moore drew my attention to him. He seemed to be in difficulties. His bamboo had slipped from under his arms and let him down. I went to his assistance at once. He promptly grabbed me around the neck, and in the struggle that followed went near to drowning us both when assistance came from a most unexpected quarter. From out of the jungle on the far side there was the sudden flash of a small brown body diving into the river. It came towards us with the grace and speed of an otter. Bowden's strangle-hold was released somehow, after which we got him to the bank unconscious and with a few gallons of the river in him, which we started to pump out in the usual manner. My attention was drawn to Moore who, while assisting in the operation, continued to chuckle like an idiot.

"Well"—I began—"what the—" He pointed to something behind me. When I turned I found myself face to face with my assistant in the water. A young *Kuki* girl and—as naked as she was born, her long black hair clinging about her back and shoulders, she stood there grinning and showing two rows of beautiful white teeth, held out one small hand with the usual request—*isa*, she thought she had earned a handful of salt.



ARTU TO THE RESCUE

Benoy



Again my attention was drawn to Moore who seemed to have a fit of choking. He pointed to Bowden, then to myself, and I waked to the fact that both of us were also as naked as Adam. What a tableau!!

Leaving the manipulation of Bowden to half a dozen of my men, I grabbed my pants and insisted on putting my old shirt on the girl, making all kinds of ridiculous signs to her to hide her nakedness. She had grinned the more and kept on with her "tsa! tsa!" I ordered one of my men to bring some salt in a piece of paper. He brought about a pound. When the girl got it in her hand she dipped her fingers into the paper and put some into her mouth. Then, grinning, she said what might have been thanks, and with my old shirt flapping about her she ran to the river and slid in on her back, holding her treasure well up out of the water, and was over the river and into the jungle in a very few minutes.

Next day, ten minutes after we had started, I was on the leading raft using my long poling bamboo when a small "dug out" crept out from behind a thick tangle of jungle. In it were squatting an old man and the heroine of the previous day's adventure who was handling a paddle. The sepoy on my raft handled his rifle, suspecting some *Kuki* trick, but the sight of the girl reassured him. She cleverly brought her little craft alongside of my raft, on to which she held, and with her impish grin, exhibiting those lovely white teeth, handed me my shirt quite dry and nicely folded. I was pleased to note that my fantastic signs and the bestowal of my shirt must have been understood, for not only the girl, but the old man also, had on a pretty smock of thin beautiful worked cane. The girl must have been about twenty, but in figure a veritable pocket Venus and as light in her movement as a butterfly. Of course, we had quite a pleasant talk—neither understanding a word that the other said. She indicated the old man and

explained volubly—whatever it was—I could not understand, whether he was her father, husband, grandfather or next-door neighbour. She was about to push off again when I stopped her canoe and my own raft until Bowden's came along. As he was unconscious when she left the day before, he was not acquainted with her. I introduced them politely. After looking at him a minute or so she turned her craft, and with a peal of laughter paddled away towards the jungle-clad bank of the river. Bowden was annoyed, exclaiming

“What the——is the young savage laughing about?”

“Blest if I know,” I said, “probably it is her way of showing her pleasure and appreciation of your manly——”

“Go to hell,” he rudely remarked and poled his raft away.

But we saw her again next day. I half expected we would. Our salt had a wonderful attraction for these people. A few days later—speaking in English—I pointed to herself and asked her name. She did not understand in the least, but making a guess that I wanted something—replied “*Ar-tui*”, and placed her hand on her chest. I nodded as having understood and repeated the words with satisfaction again intimated herself when she immediately darted off and returned after an hour with six eggs, presenting them to me with a satisfied grin. So her name was “*Ar-tui*”—very nice name too—but—it was not! as I found out later—*Ar-tui* meant eggs. The girl thought I wanted eggs and ran off to bring some, but the name stuck to her and she was *Ar-tui* to all who met her, and later on even to her own people.

Overnight I had been thinking of some way of saving labour and giving my fellows a bit of a rest as load carrying was quite enough work for them, so I arranged accordingly for our interpreter to be on my raft next day.

Half a mile or so down the river I was not surprised to see the "dug-out" with the girl and the old man. Through the interpreter I called them alongside, and after half an hour's talk we came to an agreement with them. The girl promised for the future, and as long as we were on the river, she and her father would arrange to supply us with all the rafts we would need. We would have no trouble as to cutting and collecting bamboos and constructing the rafts, and if we had to leave the river on some *dour* they would take care of them, keep them in repair, and when we got back to the river at some point—probably miles distant from where we left them—they would have them brought to us by themselves and their friends, and the only payment they needed would be a handful of salt for each day's work.

When I explained the matter to our Brigadier he good-humouredly sanctioned it.

From then onward there was hardly a day but that the girl and her father did not accompany us on our journeys down the river, sometimes bringing us eggs and chickens for which we paid them with a handful of salt. It was all they wanted.

With the interpreter's assistance I managed to collect quite a smattering of the language that during the remaining months of the expedition I found most useful.

Old Bowden seemed to have become the particular consideration of the old man and his daughter. Since we gave her to understand that he owed his life to her, it looked as if she thought he was in need of a mother's care and felt that it was her duty to look after him. At any rate it was to him that they brought all sorts of *Naga* dainties from their village. Needless to say that as a little relaxation from our daily struggles, we indulged, occasionally, in a little modest "ragging" such as addressing him as "baby" and asking him how his *ayah* (nurse) was keeping. Probably

Moore and I were a bit jealous, or perhaps it was that we had an admiration for fluency of expression in ornamental language and wished to hear Bowden's eloquence, which on such occasions was sublime—but—would hardly look nice on paper

One day a party of Manipuris from a village, by name Kakrua—forty-five miles distant—came to the camp in a state of great excitement, explaining that a great party of *Naga* head-hunters had recently occupied the jungles surrounding their village, preventing all communication from either outside or inside. Three women, two children and a man had already disappeared that—knowing what the *Nagas* were—would never be seen again. The leader of the gang was the notorious Rublud who was the terror of the whole country.

Orders were at once issued for the force to march next morning

The nature of the country that we had now to get through was even worse than what we had been through, for in addition to mosquitoes that were of a species most fierce and persistent, we now had to protect ourselves from a crawling pest of a repulsive kind of wood-louse, three-quarters of an inch long, that got on any bare part of the body and imperceptibly bored its way under the skin

By the evening of the second day we had barely travelled twenty miles, the country was so difficult to get through. Two men had died from bites of the hamadryad snakes, one had disappeared, no one knew how, and eight were down with malaria. We cursed and we grumbled—but we carried no—a soldier's life. As for my *Pathans* and *Panyaubis*—they were splendid, for though their work was hard, carrying fifty-pound loads all day long while they scrambled and slashed their way through the sweltering jungles, they

laughed, they sang and they joked with each other, while the others with Moore and Bowden—men from Bengal—were of such miserable stamina that their loads had to be cut down by ten pounds each—the difference being carried by mine. Since leaving Dimagree, fifteen of those fellows died. Bengal is not productive of stamina.

The evening of the third day found us about eight miles from Kakrua. The force was then deployed into four columns with instructions for the next day's advance—to spread out in a wide circle and slowly close in on the village.

Sometime during the night our outlying sentries heard someone calling from a short distance. They challenged in the usual manner, but not understanding what the reply was, they called the havildar of the guard—the same old man who showed us how to make rafts. The havildar had been on the Frontier for many years and had some knowledge of the language. The man who was shouting to the sentry, told him that he was a Manipuri from Kakrua and had come with urgent news of Rublud and his gang. The havildar reported the matter to his officer, who in turn thought it of importance to notify the Brigadier, who at once got out of bed and ordered that the visitor be brought—with the interpreter. A hurricane lantern was lighted and held by a sepoy as the Manipuri was brought up. The man was very tall and thin and greatly excited. He reported that early in the morning Rublud with his gang made a sudden raid into the village, killed three men and three women—taking their heads—and before the armed men of the village could assemble, the hunters were off into the jungle again. In addition, they had captured and taken away four young girls, one of which was his own daughter.

The Brigadier, who was standing outside his *basha*, turned to speak with the Colonel. While they were talking

they suddenly heard a grating sound quickly followed by a dull crash and a grunt that caused both to look round. The big Manipuri was lying on the ground with a heavy sword gripped in his hand and the havildar standing over him.

The Manipuri—none other but Rublud the daring *Naga*—head-hunter himself, disguised! Conceiving the idea that by killing the Chief of the expedition, the troops would all leave the country and return to India, leaving him free to carry on in peace, his usual merry life.

Seeing the Brigadier engaged in conversation, he thought his chance had come, quickly slipping his hand under his shawl he drew his sword, but forgot the havildar standing behind watching his every movement. As the *Naga*'s arm flew up to strike at the unsuspecting Brigadier's neck, the havildar's clubbed rifle-butt came down on his head. When he came to his senses again, he found himself securely bound. The men who first came from Kakrua with the report recognized him at once. An hour after daylight he was hanging on a stripped, thick bamboo horizontally lashed high up on two others.

Our circling movement was carried out as planned, with the result that fifteen of the head-hunting gang were killed while thirteen were taken prisoners and hanged. A collection of forty-one heads were found and buried. That was the end of "Rublud the Brave" as his followers called him.

We remained in the vicinity of the village for a week and then marched south towards Berloau, where the Column went into "standing camp" while we, with our carriers, took up the stage work once more, Bowden's was from Nos 16 to 18 where he handed over to me. Mine was from stage Nos 18 to 20, a total distance of twenty-five miles as near as we could guess, all dense jungle through which we had cut a fairly good track.

After two weeks our Medical Officer condemned Berloau as being unhealthy, so we at once marched towards the river again, for which everyone was thankful

On arriving at the river, which was about twenty miles from where we left it, I was astonished and glad to find all our rafts awaiting us and in addition half a dozen comfortable bamboo *bashas* built for us, with *Ar-tui*, her father, and with them a small crowd of others composed of a few old men, and the remainder women and girls. It was those who brought down our rafts from our last camp on the river before we marched to Kakrua and built our *bashas* under *Ar-tui*'s instructions. I was so pleased that I gave them double pay that evening. Two fistfuls of salt each, they were quite content. I noticed that the girl showed Bowden to the best-built *basha* and I did not forget to let him know it. Not only that, but he had a nicely cooked chicken for dinner while Moore and I had bully-beef and biscuits, and tea without milk and sugar, but Bowden got a double share of ragging from us that he did not enjoy very much.

Two days for rest and we were off again, but we did not mind as we had our rafts. No sooner had we reached our camp every evening than *Ar-tui* and her dad were there to meet us and show us to the *bashas* she and her friends had prepared for us. They then saw to any repairs to the rafts that might be needed. After receiving their salt they would all clear off and would not be seen again until next evening.

In this way we travelled for ten or twelve days, the Column scouting in every direction as it marched.

There did not seem to be any more trouble with the *Nagas* and the Brigadier decided to march to Dadla and Ajil, in which direction our river, the Kolondyne, did not

run, so it was the end of our rafting which was a most enjoyable experience, once free from arrow sniping, for the scenery was of such beauty that words cannot describe

We saw no more of *Ar-tuu* and her friends, who when I asked her if she was sorry to part with her baby, agreed she was, but a parting gift of a twenty-five pound bag of salt seemed to console her. Next day we told Bowden that she pitied him as he was old and foolish and that she thought he was very like her grandfather that died through eating too much raw pig's meat—a luxury in the Naga Hills

After going into standing camp in Dadla, life grew very monotonous. The troops built themselves good, strong *bashas*, but we had to carry on with stage work

One evening on my return journey I found Moore—who was not very strong—lying on one side of the track. He appeared to be very ill indeed, quite unable to walk. I got him some water and remained with him sometime, but seeing that it was impossible for him to get along, and as I could not leave him on account of wild animals, I got him on my back and with many “restings” by the way, managed to get him to camp. The doctor *cheerfully* told me Moore had Cholera. How charming for me who carried him so far! The poor chap died before morning—and that was the beginning of the epidemic

For the next four months the misery we experienced is beyond telling

Eventually we found our way back to civilization. I have no record, nor did I ever know what the others' losses were, but out of my three hundred fine men from the north, I brought back only one hundred and twenty-three—Cholera

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## THE SLAVE GIRL OF WERDAKUP

**T**WO and forty years ago life on and beyond the North West Frontier of India was largely spiced with adventure, which goes hand in hand with romance, that has ever been the history of those wild Mountain Ranges and the fierce tribes that inhabit them

Following certain interests that necessitated my travelling through those parts so far from Western law, Western civilization and Western conventions, it was not at all strange that at times I should come into personal contact with some of the many strange adventures for which those regions seemed to be, and probably still are, an ideal setting

The people are Moslems and intensely jealous of their religion to such an extent that through fear of its becoming polluted, the presence of a *kafar*, which means anyone not of their own faith, is fiercely resented, especially a European, for whom it is death to be found in their country. Not only was the European considered as the greatest enemy of their faith but was also credited with the desire and firm intention—whenever opportunity served—of planning the annexation of their land and subjecting their people to those Western laws that meant the restriction of their freedom and reducing them to condition of degraded slavery

Having left Takht-i-Kuva—ten days' journey—behind, I was plodding my way through the snow, bound for the important village of Werdakup and travelling in the guise of an *Afzana-go* (a wandering story-teller), a well recognized institution throughout the East, greatly appreciated,

honoured and always welcome, wherever he went Considered as a "semi-religious" and friendly to everyone, a wanderer forever who would only accept a little food and shelter in return for the pleasure of his beautiful stories ✓As the theatre is to the West so is the story-teller to the East

While resting in the shelter of some rocks, I observed a party of about a dozen mounted men approaching, having emerged from one of the many ravines that scarred the foot-hills Among them was a young boy of fourteen years or so, who was being held up in his saddle by a man each side As the party drew nearer I arose and rendered salutations in the usual manner Recognizing me as an *Afzana-go*, by the two well-known green patches on my *choga*, or long grey cloak, the leader of the party, a tall old man with a grey beard, dismounted and in a troubled manner asked me if I could do anything for his son, who had been bitten by a *dzagda* (a species of huge iguana, native of those mountains and as poisonous as a cobra snake) Telling the men to take the boy from his horse, I examined the wound, just above the knee From my little packet of medicines and appliances (one of the most precious possessions of my wanderings), I treated the leg by three injections of spirit of *calharias* (the remedy that proved so efficacious in the treatment of wounds from poisoned arrows, when our troops were fighting against the Thibetans at the battles of Phademchir and the storming of the terrible Lingtu Pass of 1888)

The old man was Balkhor—*Ilkham* or Chieftain of his tribe, with Werdakup as his central residence He was most grateful for my assistance and insisted I should be his honoured guest as long as I wished to remain in his country I had heard much of old Balkhor and knew that he was considered to be a tyrant to his people He now

ordered one of his followers to dismount and give me his horse while he mounted behind another man, and in this way we slowly rode to the village. The old man made me very welcome to his house and was most profuse in his gratitude, too much so, in fact, as the story will tell.

Having seated ourselves on a cushioned *machan* before a big fire burning in the centre of the great *akhwan* or "public room", he clapped his hands a few times impatiently. After a couple of minutes a young woman, or girl, for she was not more than seventeen, came in. Balkhor swore at her, calling her an "idle and lazy she-pig" and ordered her to pull off my wet boots. Those long Badakhshani boots are made of soft leather that, when wet, cling to the legs and are most difficult to remove. I guessed that the girl was one of his slaves, as such were common in the houses of influential people in that region. She struggled hard to haul off the boots, I helping her as best I could by wriggling my feet. Whether it was that Balkhor thought that I was being hurt or that the girl was not doing her best I could not say, but suddenly his hand reached behind and from his belt drew a *chaghza*—a most cruel species of riding whip with a short, heavy, brass-bound stock and two thick thongs of plaited raw-hide—and slashed the poor girl across her shoulders, at the same time heaping on her the most foul abuse. The poor girl with a gasp of pain just wilted down over my feet from the force of the blow, cutting through the thin cotton covering that was quickly stained with blood. The old savage seemed mad with rage and made a second slash at the girl's head, but that did not reach her for I threw up my arm, catching the blow on it, saying—"My friend, as your guest and as an advocate of peace and kindness wherever I go, I ask mercy for the *jariyet* (female slave)!" In a moment he seemed to recover himself and, throwing aside the whip, sent the girl creeping away, one of his followers completing

the job of removing my wet boots, that the girl could not manage. That night after attending to the boy, I entertained the old *Ilkhan* and his household until midnight with stories evolved from Hans Andersen and Grimm's Fairy Tales, for such those wild people dearly love. Afterwards I was shown to the Guest-house, about a hundred yards or so from the *Sakhin-i-Ilkhana* (the Chieftain's own residence), where I was to lodge during my stay.

Notwithstanding that Balkhor appeared to be very kind and friendly, my experience among those people did not stand for complete trust, so that I kept my revolver handy when going to sleep on the big *machan*—a kind of wooden bed, low, broad, and with a thin cushion of felt mat.

The small hours of the morning brought me a surprise, the nature of which I had no liking for. My room being in total darkness, I could not see anyone but still felt sure that there was some one inside. In a moment I was on the *qui vive*, and gripping the revolver, quickly and quietly rolled over to the far side of the *machan*, so that the knife-thrust I was half expecting—the usual way for dealing with a suspected person—would miss the calculated position, when it would be my cue to come into action, for which I was prepared, but a few softly whispered words made me hold my breath. "Aftaba! It is I, Zaigi, the *jariyel* to whom you showed kindness."

I was not inclined to be taken in by a trick, and did not relax my grip of the revolver. "Well," I replied—"what do you want and why—"

"Oh, Aftaba! I must speak quickly and must not be heard."

In a moment she was on the *machan*, crouching close to where I sat, clasping my arm in her trembling hands.

"Aftaba! There is no time now, but for the mercy of Allah, do not leave here for another day, let Dara be your excuse! I will come again to-morrow night at the same time and explain all, your departure now would mean my death, as my young sister died *Araftana* (good-bye)!" and pressing her face to my hand, melted away into the darkness as silently as she had come

The whole incident was so unexpected and passed so quickly that I did not have time to pull my wits together or grasp the meaning of it, beyond that the girl was in great fear of something dreadful happening, and as I had been the means of saving her from punishment once, she probably had an idea that I might be of assistance again I had no liking for the situation at all! I had some very peculiar and important business of my own to accomplish, and to get mixed up with unpleasant family affairs of Balkhor did not promise to be healthy at all, especially when the feminine element was the cause of the trouble,—which it always has been and always will be!

Next morning, on examining the boy Dara I found that he was in a high fever which would detain me for another day or two—quite irrespective of the girl's pathetic exhortation—as I could not leave the lad to the ignorant ministrations of the village quacks

For saving the life of his only son, "the light of his life and centre of all his hopes and solace of his old age" as he said, Balkhor asked me to stay with him for months, his invitation not altogether uninfluenced by the pleasure he and his people received from my nightly stories, but this did not suit my plans It was imperative that I should reach *Sugarda* by the new moon

During the day Balkhor took me to see his horses, of which he was justly proud, for a finer collection I have seldom

seen in Badakhshan, a country famous for good horses, and now again the savage in the old boy showed itself when he discovered some slight fault or neglect on the part of one of his stable-men. He whipped out his long knife and made a lunge at the man that would have killed him on the spot, but that he evidently knew his master and was on the look-out for such amenities. He dodged the thrust and took to his heels with the long knife flying past his head.

For the remainder of the day I spent my time strolling about the village and having friendly talks with the people, all of whom showed me the greatest kindness and friendly feeling, but I noticed that they carefully kept the conversation away from Balkhor and his affairs. As for myself it would have been bad policy to show the least curiosity on the subject.

With the coming of night the storm that had been gathering during the evening, broke over the valley with terrific force.

The glare of lightning, the crashing of thunder echoing and re-echoing through the surrounding hills, and the rain in such a deluge proved the elements as suitable accompaniment to the wild stories that I told that night, as the old *Ilkham* and his people sat huddled around the fire, with the boy Dara, who was somewhat better, between his father and I.

On retiring to the Guest-house about midnight, I was in doubt as to the slave girl having the courage to brave the elements and pay her promised visit—and to tell the truth I hoped she would not, for the more I thought of it the less I liked being mixed up in anything that would hamper the freedom of my movements through Badakhshan and Turko, still it might be that she would take full advantage of the storm to favour opportunity, and that proved to be correct.

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Although I was wide awake at the appointed time, I was startled on hearing the softly whispered "Aftaba" from the darkness without speaking, I put out my hand which came in contact with her wet face and streaming hair. Seated by my side on the low edge of the *machan*, she quickly explained matters, the gist of which was that on my departure from the village her death would be prompt, for Balkhor never forgave, and the restriction forced upon him by his guest's reprimand in his desire to punish her in the presence of his people was an indignity he would never tolerate. He would do nothing while I was present, as the duty to a guest is a sacred command laid down in the "law", as represented in the Koran, but as soon as I was gone he would have her "put away," as he had disposed of her sister, but now there was the chance that through my agreeing to her suggestion she would be saved. She was aware that young Dara, the son, was the one and only being on earth that the old man loved, and as I had undoubtedly saved the boy's life, his father was sure on my departure, to make me a gift of some kind that would be of his most precious possessions, and would in all probability be one of his best horses. I was to decline the gift on some reasonable ground, and ask instead—on account of being ill and weak—for the assistance of one of his many *jariyets* to attend me on my travels. Needless to say that *jariyet* was to be herself.

Well, here was a nice to do! And what on earth was I to do! I was so worried and annoyed that I sho'ed the girl away at once. Having pressed my hand to her forehead and calling Allah to help me—I needed it—she silently departed as before.

The situation was a delicate one, and, moreover, a dangerous one. To refuse the gift of a fine horse, for which I had a lot of use, and hamper myself with a slave girl for

which I had NO use, or accept the horse and forget all about the slave girl and her troubles! Was it possible that all this fuss was a "make-up" of hers to get away from Werdakup with someone to look after her and that Balkhor was not the brute she said he was? But as to this last, well, I knew all about him, and I have not much to say for his magnanimity As I could not make up my mind about the wretched business, so "when in doubt do nothing" was the only advice I could give myself, but all the same something must be done eventually On the morning of the fourth day I decided to waste no more time, and as young Dara was quite himself again I sought out the *Ilkhami* and informed him that I had resolved to depart that morning After a meal with the father and son I proceeded to my room to make ready On emerging, Balkhor met me and taking me by the hand, led me to where a man was holding a fine horse, saddled and bridled He placed the reins in my hand and with many words of kindness and deep gratitude said that the horse was mine, a "poor gift and not worthy the great service I had done him," by saving the life of his beloved son Then as the girl foretold—everything happened I thanked the old man saying that the gift was too great and explained that it would be foolish for me to accept as I was altogether ignorant of horses and would never be able to look after such a beautiful horse properly, with the result that it would suffer On hearing this the old man's lips tightened as if in disapproval "But"—I continued—"of late I have not been in good health and find much difficulty in my travels, but to leave you without accepting some small gift would not be just to you, so, as I need assistance you may give me one of your many *jariyets* as an attendant instead of this beautiful horse"



To Face Page 01

I BECOME A SLAVE OWNER



Watching his face, I caught an undoubted gleam of satisfaction in his sharp old eyes. He would not have to part with his beautiful horse, and a *jariyet*, more or less, was nothing, women were but inferior animals, and as a proof or evidence of this degrading mentality in those parts, I, personally have, more than once, witnessed the spectacle of a woman being paired off with a bullock, her head through the yoke of a plough, and driven by her husband or master, while ploughing the field!

On hearing my request, Balkhor immediately gave an order and in a few minutes no less than eleven women and girls were brought for me to choose from, among them being the girl Zaigi, and a more dirty, disreputable and idiotic looking specimen of feminine humanity, as she now appeared, it was seldom my fortune to see

"My friend," said the *Ilkham*, "here are some of our *jariyets*—if you don't care for any of them, I will send for others"

After a pretended inspection I pointed to Zaigi as my selection. The old man grinned and said—"But, my friend, you have chosen one that I consider the most useless among them" I shook my head and explained that I did not want one that was *too* clever to be useful. He ordered her to go to the Guest-house and bring the small roll of necessaries that I usually carried. In addition he offered me the loan of a quiet old mule that would carry me to Garbad, 20 miles distant, where I was to hand it over to the Malik of the place, who was his friend.

I mounted the old mule, with pretended difficulty, and with the girl carrying my pack, and trudging behind in accordance with the custom of the country, we departed from Werdakup

Now!—I had something to think about, but—how or what to think! The situation—I did not know whether to call it tragic or funny! A British Officer as a slave owner, and what a slave! A hefty young *Turico* wench who considered me her owner and master forever I just wondered what my fiancée, down in India, would have to say about it—if she knew!

A mile or so from the village, as we passed through a ravine, I chanced to cast a look behind, and did not see the girl I had an idea that finding herself safe, she might have bolted—and a "wish was father to the thought"—but I was unfortunate For another mile or so I jogged along at the same slow pace, brooding sadly over my unlucky experience, when she walked out from between some rocks My surprise was great, when instead of the dirty and slovenly creature that had trailed behind my old mule on leaving the village, I now saw a really smart, upstanding and remarkably good-looking girl, who laughed at my surprise, and speaking clearly and correctly in beautiful Persian said—"Aftaba, I had to make myself as you saw me in the village, so that Balkhor would have no wish to keep me, which he certainly would have done if he saw me now"—and again—just like the girl she was—she laughed

One might think that the change for the better in her would be more pleasing to me, but one would be mistaken, very much so In fact it made the situation more awkward than it was before An *Afzana-go* wandering through the country with a low, common creature of a *jaiyet* to act as a servant and a coolie would not attract very much attention, but with a clean and charming young girl as his companion the consequences would be—what?

The prevailing respect and regard that was ever given to the *Afzana-go* would be no more I explained this to the girl, but with the insouciance of youth, she only laughed and

said everything would be "alright" I noticed that, as she rejoined me, she had a second bundle of some kind I said no more, but in a dispirited and worried frame of mind, meandered on for a few miles more

At last I resolved to come to an understanding with this girl, that suddenly assumed the bearing of an equal, instead of that of a slave, as she was in reality I dismounted, and holding the mule by the reins sat on a rock by the way-side, and turning to speak to her, I found that once again she had disappeared We were now among the foot-hills below the Budragh Pass—8,000 feet high—over which we would have to go before we got to Garbad As we would soon be in the deep snow higher up, I decided to have something to eat, Balkhor's people had packed plenty of food for us I then remembered that the food was in the pack that the girl was carrying—and where the devil was the girl? Well, she was welcome to the pack and all it contained if she would only make herself scarce, once and for all, but as I was about to remount and proceed on my way, I was somewhat surprised to see a handsome-looking boy make his appearance from among the rocks, and coming towards me placed a bundle that I recognized as my own, on the ground The young fellow was Zaigi, disguised as a boy, and a handsome boy at that! It appears that the previous night she managed to steal a bundle of male clothing from somewhere and had run out during the storm to hide it among the rocks, a mile away, in preparation for this journey on which she had calculated correctly

Well, now that I had a young man as a companion it certainly eased the situation, but not altogether—for hang it all—she was still a girl!

"Now," I began, reseating myself on the rock, "just sit down, have something to eat, and let us come to a sensible understanding"

After finishing our food, Zaigi repacked the bundle and setting it aside, remarked—"Now, Aftaba, I am ready"

"Well, in the first place you are now free from Balkhor and need have no more fear as regards him and his village, so you must tell me what you intend to do and to where you wish to go"

"But, Aftaba!" she replied, still standing in front of me—"I belong to you forever, and will go with you always, as your servant, wherever you go"

"Not at all, Zaigi," I exclaimed emphatically, "you cannot come with me, you must return to your own people, whoever or wherever they may be"

"But," she insisted, "you cannot do without me You will always want me to attend you and carry your *asbab* (belongings), and it is my happiness to be your servant"

"Oh, don't bother me about servants!" I said, irritated by her persistency—"I can get a servant when I need one, but I cannot, or will not, keep you with me"

Her look of surprise, and I think displeasure, suggested that she considered herself slighted, but after I had fully and very kindly explained matters, and given her *sound* and well *constructed* reasons, she, not without a pathetic show of regret, consented to take my advice Then seating herself on the rock beside me, she told me her tragic story

"Aftaba," she began, "my sister and I were the only two daughters of Fergu Beg, the *Ilkhan* of Khizlab, far away to the north beyond the big snow mountains One evening while my young sister—her name was Uarnie—and I were making purchases in the *sok* (bazaar) a pleasant and very respectable looking woman was very kind to us and gave us some sweet-meats Aftaba, those sweets were

drugged! When, sick in mind and body, we recovered our senses we found ourselves mounted on camels and travelling with a caravan. For many days we travelled, I don't know how many, and through the great snow mountains where we were so cold. Often we asked the people who gave us food as to where we were being taken, but they only laughed at us. After we lay ill with fever in a village for some days, we were at last brought, in the darkness of night, to the house of *Ilkham* Balkhor, where we were forced to do all kinds of menial work that we would never do in our own home. We were badly clothed and fed, beaten at times and generally ill-treated because we insisted that we were the daughters of a Chieftain and could not be expected to work as common slaves."

From the general tone of Zaigi's further remarks, I gathered that she was most indignant at the manner of her abduction. Had she been captured and carried off in a raid by someone who wanted her for his wife (such as was usual in her country), and there were many as she gave me to understand, it would have been quite alright, but to be drugged and sold as a "common slave" was more than a Chieftain's daughter could bear, and continuing her story —

"On one occasion Balkhor had my beautiful young sister stripped naked in the *lagoora* (open market place), and flogged to insensibility with a heavy *chaghaza* in the presence of all the village—men, women and children—and when I cried and protested he had me put down into an old well, damp, cold and full of nasty crawling things, with only raw onions for food, and kept me there for three days and nights. One night about a week after this I heard agonizing screams and was told next day that I would never see my sister again. The devil, Balkhor, had her strangled

and her body thrown out in the snow among the ravines for the wolves and vultures to devour ”

Sobbing in a heartbroken manner, and with big tears running down her cheeks, the poor girl ended her sad story. Words of sympathy were all the comfort I could give, so I let her have a good cry , she would feel better for it

Well, we had to get back to the matter in hand the getting her back to Khizlab and her own people She had no idea of how far the place was, or even the direction, beyond that it was in the “ far north,” and “ over the big snow mountains,” but as it happened I was fairly well acquainted with the topography of the region and knew that Khizlab was a place of considerable importance situated about a hundred and eighty miles from where we then were, and to reach it two courses were possible either attach ourselves to a caravan that would be likely to go in that direction very soon—but in this there was always the risk of her sex being discovered by some of the trader’s people—or that I constituted her as my *chela* or apprentice and servant, learning to become an *Afzana-go*, and accordingly sharing in the respect and consideration ever accorded to him. This in addition to being the safest mode of travel seemed to appeal to her as best

Having settled this matter, the next procedure was to give her the correct appearance of an apprentice, which was a common type of servant to be usually found loafing about the villages

Her hair had to be cut and this we managed with a long knife, so that it straggled on her neck from under her old felt hat, in an unkempt and dirty thatch The long brown *chogha* she had stolen from Werdakup, covered her from neck to ankle , it was gathered into a rough-hide belt (into which a rusty knife was thrust at the waist) and

was made a little more ragged and dirty than before. Then to give her a more masculine appearance just a small colouring from one of my "make-up" bags, on the upper lip and cheeks, suggesting an incipient moustache and beard, the whole finished off with a few smudges of dirt, not at all strange to people not overfond of washing in those cold lands

Now that everything appeared alright, we continued our journey, arriving in Garbad in the dusk of the evening, where the *Afzana-go* and his *chela* were welcomed in the usual manner

For half that night I kept the Malik and his friends interested in stories of fairies, demons, beautiful princesses heroic princes, warriors and evil spirits, so that no one bothered about my servant!

Overflowing with good nature and kindness, the Malik insisted on giving me one of his best rooms for the remainder of the night, while my apprentice or *chela*, after setting out my small possessions, took himself off to the servants' quarters, somewhere else

Next morning I handed over Balkhor's old mule to the Malik, who promised to return it, and in gratitude for my stories lent me a pony for that day's journey, mentioning someone in our stopping place to whom I could hand it over, and in this manner we travelled for seven days which brought us to the big mountain range that separates the girl's country from Khoshud in Northern Badakhshan

Crossing that range in a blizzard of snow and sleet was an terrible experience, lasting some eight and forty hours. I was worried as to the fear of Zaigi collapsing, but I need not have been, for she was young, strong and used to such storms. We reached Fadagh Deb, a small village sheltered

among the foot-hills, in a wet, draggled and half-starved condition, and here was the end of my travelling for some days to come, for it appears that the wet and cold I underwent on the ranges put me down with a severe bout of ague and fever, that kept me in bed for ten days, but the girl *had* to go on alone from there, I *insisted* on it. During those long journeys we made together, I made a rough but practicable drawing of the route she would take to get to Khizlab—only about seventy-five miles from Fadagh Deb—and travelling in the same guise I felt confident that being a girl of more than ordinary intelligence, courage and hardihood, she would reach her home safely. I had coached her well as to the route she would take for the next five or six days, and gave her some Badakhshi coins for food in the villages. Of course, she begged to stay and look after me while I was ill, but I would not hear of it, and besides from there my road would take me in another direction altogether from her's

I have just a hazy recollection that sometime during the night, as I restlessly tossed about on the *machan* half delirious with fever, Zaigī softly crept into the room to say good-bye, and while crouching by the *machan* whispered —

“Aftaba, Allah will forever protect you, and show you kindness and mercy as you have shown me,” then moved to the door, where she paused a moment and returned to stoop over me and whisper —

“Aftaba, we will meet again—soon,” and was gone

My travels for the next two months were slow, irregular and altogether unsatisfactory owing to ill-health. I did not seem able to shake off the wretched malaria—the after-effects of my experience on the Luoqhar Range. In many villages I was compelled to lie up for days at a time

It was during one of those bad spells, while resting in the village of Fraghag, some two months after Zaigî departed for her home, and about fifty miles off the track, that one night I was suddenly awakened by an alarm of some kind. Such alarms usually mean a raid, anything from a band of brigands out for loot, or a reprisal attack to even up some wrong, or, again, some Lothario who with the assistance of some of his friends, has come to carry off his *mamorata* against her father's wishes, but whatever it is, it means fighting. I was too ill and weak to get out of bed or to bother about it, but from the clatter of arms and tramping of many horses, I judged it to be a well organized incursion. I was right, but was surprised not to hear the sound of shooting, the usual introduction, attendant on the raids. Instead the cavalcade came to a halt in the middle of the village, and a consultation of some kind seemed to be carried on.

I was dozing off once more when the door of my room was gently opened, and by the dim light cast by a dozen torches from outside I saw the figure of an elaborately dressed young man, who came towards my bed, and threw himself down with his hands about my shoulders, saying but one word—“Aftaba !”

Needless to say, it was Zaigî—my one-time slave girl! Behind in the doorway stood a tall man of noble and commanding presence, with a long, carved *talwar* by his side, and a round, ornamental shield slung over his shoulder. The girl introduced her father.

She had a great deal to tell me, and even persuaded me to get up and, with her help and her father's, go outside, as she had “*something to show me*”

Many would be astonished at the scene, presented to me in the flaring, dancing light of a dozen torches, but I

had had much experience among these people and was beyond astonishment. Full forty wild horsemen, all armed to the teeth, sat their horses in silence, while, bound in their midst was my old acquaintance—Balkhor!

The history of all this was that Zaigi got back to her home safely, and when her father and his people heard her story, the tribe was organized, and the avenging raid, led by Zaigi, who was acquainted with the way, travelled quickly and silently through and over the mountains, and fell on Werdakup in the darkness of the night, killed a few who resisted and took Balkhor prisoner.

When I asked the girl what she intended to do with her prisoner, she laughed, and the sound of her laughter sent a shiver down my spine.

"Oh," she replied, "for a few years we will keep him comfortably. We have such a lot to teach him, he will learn quite a lot from us, especially in the use of the *chaghaza*! Yes, Aftaba, Balkhor has a lot to answer for, and the spirit of my beautiful Uarnie will rest in peace!"

They led me inside again and having bid me farewell, Zaigi and her father rejoined their troop, and the trampling of their horses soon died away leaving the little village in its usual silence and darkness.

Four years later fate took me to Khuzlab—the home of Zaigi, the slave girl, but that story is yet to be told.

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## “ AFZANA-GO ”

### THE WANDERING STORY-TELLER

THE year was 1895. The beleaguered little garrison in Chitral fort had been relieved and our forces under General Gatacre had returned to India, but I, being acquainted with the language and having had considerable experience among the Border Tribes, was left behind as an assistant towards the project of raising and organizing a local “ Levy ” corps of Chitralis. The work though strenuous and exasperating at times was not altogether uninteresting, as the training of the wilder element among our recruits often provided some amusing interludes for instance, to stand and watch a big mountaineer, on being issued with certain of the usual articles of military kit, desperately struggling to pull a pair of grey woollen socks over his No 12 ammunition boots—when asked the reason, he looked up and with a cheerful grin informed me in a confidential voice that the *jorgu* (socks) were intended to “ keep the boots on and protect them from dirt ”. Another sample of their clever discrimination was, when I found two men having a desperate rough and tumble in the snow over some small change—a half-anna copper coin and a four-anna silver bit. Both men wanted the half-anna copper coin *because it was the bigger* but when I explained the matter and gave the man with the silver bit the equivalent in copper, *i.e.*, eight half-anna bits, he grinned at the other and immediately there was a bigger row than ever.

After a few months, progress being satisfactory, we were settling down to a well earned period of relaxation and the prospect of a spot of *shikar* (shooting) over the

Mordag hills to the south, where there was to be found *markhor*, *ooral*, and during the winter, even snow leopards; but fate decided otherwise, for when returning from the river one evening with a few ducks for next day's dinner, our signaller met me with a rather disturbing "hilio" message, on account of which I left Chitral the same night on a long and dangerous journey

Twenty days later, just as night was falling, a weary traveller, cold and hungry, slowly plodded his way through the snow towards a small hamlet that lay in a valley running northward between Karjub in Badakhshan and the Lutkho border. He wore a long brown *chogha* with certain green patches on it, a rolled felt cap and the soft leather knee-boots of the country, while hanging from a strap around his neck was a brown felt bag, that held one of the little *suharas* so loved by the Badakhshans. That whiskered, weary and hungry pilgrim was myself

Nearing the village, I was first welcomed by a pack of those ugly-tempered dogs that are the natural guardians of every village and mountain home. The barking of the dogs brought out a lot of youngsters to see who the stranger was. They stared for a moment or so, and then seeing the green patches on my *chogha*—the badge that all recognized—with a joyous yell they were all around me, laughing and dancing about while pulling me along by my old *chogha* and gleefully shouting "Afzana-go! Afzana-go!" ("the Wandering Story-teller"), for it was in that disguise that I intended to accomplish the delicate business that took me into those wild mountains

Throughout Central Asia the "Story-teller" is a well-recognized and favoured individual, welcome wherever he goes. I was soon seated before a nice big fire in the house of Khardu Khan, the Malik, with a dish of steaming goat

stew between my knees, and as I had tramped over twenty miles through the cold and trackless hills since morning, that stew was consoling

After a good feed and a rest I was ready for the keenly expected story Every man, woman, boy and girl in the village crowded into the big *akhwan* or public room, in the Malik's house, most of them sitting on the floor, the remainder standing around the blazing log-fire in the centre

One of the youngsters handed me my little *sithai* with which stories are always accompanied Having tuned the strings and touched a few whispering notes of one of their own plaintive mountain melodies, I told the story of Bardakh and the beautiful Princess Vindalura, their chequered fortunes and strange adventures as they wandered through the dark and haunted valleys of *Baroghdasht* (the lost world)

The pathetic tale lasted until midnight, during which time those people, young and old, scarcely moved or breathed, but with an occasional sigh of sympathy or an unrestrained sob of pity, as they followed the varying phases of the lovers' adventures

I give this little detail merely as a verbal illustration of the manner in which I found it convenient when travelling the wild and difficult countries of a fierce and fanatic people among whom my life would not be worth a sou if they but had an inkling of who or what I was

I remained but one night in Karjub, notwithstanding the pressing invitation of the Malik to stay longer, but I promised to come again soon

Four days later I arrived at the Kokcha river At the ferry I found a mixed party of about two dozen men,

women and children waiting to cross, but on account of a recent heavy spate the crossing looked extremely dangerous. Nor did the appearance of the old ferry inspire me with too much confidence, especially when I considered the number of people intending to cross.

As it was getting dark and a storm rising, I scrambled into the old boat with the crowd. We had hardly got into midstream when it began to pitch and twist about in an alarming manner. The women and children started to scream and clutch at the men about them. Seeing the danger of the situation, I thought it time to make a few preparations for whatever might happen. I took off my old *chogha* and rolling in it my little *sitha* and my boots, tied it tightly over my shoulders.

By now it was quite dark which added to the general confusion, causing the ferry-men to lose their heads with the result I had foreseen.

They completely lost control of the old hulk with disastrous consequences. After rolling deeply to one side, the frightened people crowded to the other, which doubly increased the angle of descent on that side on the return roll, and over it went.

I was expecting it, and a few seconds before it happened I quietly slipped over the side and slid into the water, being careful not to go below the surface that my bundle might not get too wet, and was just about to strike out at once so as to get clear of struggling people who would quickly have me down with themselves, when high above the storm I heard a woman's cry and a bundle of some kind struck the water by my side. That bundle was a baby, for I seemed to catch a faint cry from it as it fell. I promptly seized it and tucked it over my shoulder with my *chogha*.

By the time I was forty yards from the sinking boat the screams of the doomed people were smothered in the storm

The distance to the other bank was not more than a hundred and fifty yards, but the force of the current carried me down for about quarter of a mile before I could make it.

My first act on landing was to have a look at the child and was pleased to find it quite alright, as proof of which it began to howl vigorously Wrapping it up in the *chogha* to protect it from the icy wind, I made for the little hamlet situated near the ferry landing

In the first house I came to, a young woman, having heard my story of the disaster, made me welcome and took charge of the child It was a fine little boy of about two years of age. After a drink of hot milk and a good sleep it did not appear to be any the worse for its ducking

In the meantime the few people of the hamlet ran along the bank of the river with the object of assisting any that might have been washed ashore, but of the two dozen or so that were in the boat, only five were found alive Among them was a boy of fifteen who said that the child belonged to a woman who was returning to her husband's house up north in the Taghan province from a visit to her parents' home

It appears that when the storm and the condition became alarming, this boy with the woman noticed me making preparations for eventualities and even saw me slip into the river as the boat capsized The child's mother quickly realizing the danger and fearing the worst as far as herself,

thought of her child and grasped at a chance of saving it by trusting it to the protection of a man who by his action had inspired confidence As soon as she saw me in the water she, with the cry that I had heard, threw the child to me

For that night I stayed in the little hamlet and departed next morning, having satisfied myself that the child was alright and in safe hands

My next halting place was the village of Irdakht some seventeen miles distance through wild country that lay silent and dead in the lonely wastes of snow. I did not reach the place until dark for there was no track that one could follow, only the *direction* which once lost would mean perishing among the trackless hills and tortuous ravines.

As usual I was made welcome by the whole village and cheerfully conducted to the Malik's house where I spent the night in comfort, and in return for their hospitality regaled the people, to their intense delight, with a long story about "Sinbad the Sailor" from "*Alif-i-lelah*" (The Thousand Nights) It was delightful to see the expression of pleasure and intense enjoyment in the faces of these people as, in absorbed silence, they sat in circles one behind the other around the big fire, while I, with the Malik, sat on a raised *machan* facing the crowd The story usually began when night had fallen and lasted for two or three hours with an interval for tea (of the Russian kind) and nuts It happened that among my audience that night there was a small party of Khurdias that with a convoy of Bactrian camels intended to travel in the same direction as myself next day, and very kindly invited me to accompany them as far as Shewa With the party was a Tajik who seemed to be very much interested in me and my travels A short, thick-set man with an ugly squint and a pock-marked face

On work like mine, it behoves a man to be suspicious of everyone, and for some inexplicable reason my suspicion of this fellow was particularly keen, notwithstanding that he tried to be very friendly and even offered to share his camel with me. When he enquired as to my destination, I replied with a twanging cord on my *sithara* and in the poetic style of the *Afzana-go*—quoting Sheik Saadi's well-known couplet—

“Where the birds sing in freedom and the cold winds blow

The wide world smiles me a welcome and with her I go

I wander in freedom with never a care,  
No matter the road—just anywhere”

As a matter of fact my destination was Takht-i-Kuva on the Turkistan side of the Amu-dariya where it joins the Kundus river, where I hoped to arrive very soon

Though my Khurdia friends were travelling north, I thought it advisable to part from them and make a pretence of going east towards Zabak. The Tajik became very inquisitive as to my reason for this. I told him that in Zabak I had a dear friend whom I had not met for over three years and that was down south in Kila Drasin, he asked me if I could read. “Yes,” I replied, “but not the kind you mean. I read all nature, the mountains, the streams, the moon and the stars, and the divine music of the winds”

This seemed to satisfy him that I could *not* read. A little while later he approached me, and handing me a folded paper asked me, as a favour, to deliver it to a friend of his,

by name Zulfa Beg, as I passed through the village of Darjun on my way to Zabak I took the paper promising to do so and we parted, for which I was not sorry, but I had no intention of going very far east.

That night I passed in the village of Latun in the usual manner. Next day, after proceeding a few miles towards Darjun, I sat down behind a rock, and after very careful examination of the Tajik's paper to see how it was folded, opened it. My suspicions were justified! The fellow had doubts about me and the letter to his friend was to have me watched and followed. I was careful to fold the note as it was, and put it in my bag. I had still many miles to travel, and danger in every mile. Who, or what this man was I could not say for certain, but having had a wide experience of the breed, I suspected him of being one of the many spies that are set to watch the Frontiers of India by a certain northern power. Well! I had a job to do and I intended to do it. If my friend, the Tajik, became troublesome—! However, we would see!

I again turned north and crossed the Taghan border. A week later, I arrived in the village of Shughda where I was made welcome in the house of Qualkar, the Usbeg, who hearing the children shouting "*Afzana-go*" came running out with a child in his arms and greeted me in such a way that at first made me think he had mistaken me for someone else, but I understood when he informed me that he was the father of the child I had saved from the Kokcha river.

I had taken many days to do the journey there, as I had travelled by indirect ways, but a friendly trader had taken the child with his camel convoy. Qualkar loved his little son as his life and would not hear of my leaving next day, but now things began to happen

About mid-day, a horseman rode into the village. It was my friend, the Tajik. When I last saw him he was riding a camel and going towards Firdan. Now he was riding a fine horse and coming from another direction altogether. What could all this mean but that he had *business* with me and my affairs? I was very much annoyed but not in the least surprised, so, when a little later we met, it was with a pleasant and hearty greeting on both sides. The deadly politeness of the oriental!

When he enquired if I had delivered his note, I returned it, saying I had lost my way in the mountains and never got to Darjun, and with an air of innocence and simplicity expressed my regret. He carefully examined the folded paper and with a grin that was intended to be good natured said it did not matter in the least as it "was not of much importance." All the same the fellow's arrival worried me considerably. I was now eager to get to Takht-i-Kuva, Qualkar having given me a note of introduction to a Turko friend who would give me shelter while there.

Having made enquiries as to the road, I learned that it led through certain parts of the Sogdhu ranges, noted as a haunt of the wild Mongol and Tajik brigands on account of its wonderful labyrinth of caves.

Toward the end of the day I had ascended to a height of some 7,000 feet, following a winding track that looked like leading into the very heart of the mountains. While resting for a breathing spell, I took note of a comfortable looking cave close by that would serve as a resting place for the night. It was then that I happened to look backward down the track and was not very surprised to catch sight of a horseman a quarter of a mile below, following and riding up towards where I was sitting by the opening of the cave.







and knees crept silently towards my sleeping place To give him the confidence that might make him a little careless, I began to breathe heavily, not amounting to a snore Silently and slowly he crawled to within six feet of where I lay, but his breathing, repressed as it was, gave me his exact position, then my *Webley* spoke There was just one coughing gasp and not another movement from the Tajik Before daybreak I had his body comfortably hidden away down one of the many dark oubliettes that traversed the big cave

The horse I stripped of his gear, which I threw down a deep gorge, and he I turned loose, to go where he pleased, but as I expect to fall a useful prize to one of the habitual frequenters of the ranges—the brigands—who would not bother to ask questions as to the owner

The papers and other matter I found on the Tajik were of great assistance to me later on

Two days later I crossed the Amu-dariya by ferry and quietly entered Takht-i-Kuva after dark, and following the directions given to me by Qualkar, the Usbeg, in Shughda, I found the house of his friend, the Turiko, though not without some difficulty, as the town, like all very old eastern towns, was a tangled maze of narrow roads and dark gullies

The Turiko, whose name was Ibrak Mohmand, made me welcome for as long as I pleased

From the papers I took from the Tajik, I became acquainted with certain addresses where I succeeded in gaining much of the information I was after I remained in Takht-i-Kuva for a month, and through my stories became

quite a favourite, mixed with all kinds of people, committed two thefts, and incidentally succeeded in finally achieving the object of my long and dangerous journey

My return journey to Chitral *by another route—advisedly*—was not without adventure, but the account of this will appear in the sequel

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## MY ESCAPE FROM A BADAKHSHANI PRISON

YES, I got into prison certainly and the experience was not pleasant, but I'll tell you all about it

We were so successful in organizing our Levy Corps that it was decided to add to it a supernumerary arm in the shape of a troop of mounted scouts that as a mobile body would be more useful than infantry when urgent business necessitated quick action at distant points in a difficult, mountainous country

It devolved upon me to do what I could towards providing fifty sturdy *yaboops* (horses) for the purpose

Having made my arrangements, and with a companion, old Wali Daud, my Duffadar, we quickly established ourselves as horse-dealers and rode from Chitral through *Raen Shaghram* and *Kila Drasin* until we reached Zabak in Badakhshan where we placed our Agent, Wasu Ibrahim a resident of *Kila Drasin*, who was to take over and pay cash for all horses we having purchased, would send down to him from the country higher up

Wali Daud, my Duffadar, faithful friend and companion in many stirring adventures on and beyond the Indian Frontiers, was a character that would, with justice, illuminate the pages of the most romantic story. About fifty years of age, very tall and thin but made of steel wire the hooked nose, hazel eyes and the features of a hawk, generally, and not unlike one morally. He belonged to the tribe of the Akha Khel and for years held the reputation of being the cleverest and most daring horse-thief on the Frontiers, but

on account of the little matter of his having had occasion to shoot three men of a neighbouring tribe, he thought it advisable to leave his old haunts for a time and elected to find sanctuary by joining the Indian Army until matters of such like faded into oblivion, as it easily does in those parts. Possibly we discovered in each other a nature composed of the same ingredients—wherefore, we foregathered.

We made our way over the Kokcha River into the province of Shewa where, we were informed, the best and most suitable breed of horses for mountain work was to be found, and this proved to be correct, for a few days later, farther north, some thirty miles at Ishkassim, we secured eight fine animals, then, having crossed the Ab-i-Panja River, we made our way to Mazar, fifty miles onward. We were in luck and managed to purchase another dozen. Re-crossing the river and skirting Lake Shewa we rode west and obtained ten more in and about Wara Shahr. All those were sent down in charge of their owners with credit notes to Wasu Ibrahim at Zabak. So far, matters were satisfactory, but afterwards our luck seemed to petter out. There were plenty of horses to be had but not suitable for our purpose. From Wara Shahr we rode north and crossed the Shar Jabin Pass, halting for a few days in the small village of Fughar immediately the other side of the Pass to give our own horses the rest that they had well earned.

While resting there we let it be known that we wished to purchase some good horses. We were examining a few that some mountain men brought in when a tall, lanky man rode up on a big roan mare. I bought her from the fellow for the equivalent of two hundred rupees. He wanted cash down, but I refused, saying he must go down to Zabak with the others, taking a credit note, and this he did, but as things turned out he never got the money.

Next day we sent down six horses, including my own, for the mare was such a beauty that I decided to keep her myself and was well pleased with the exchange

Three days later we crossed the Shai Dara Pass and after an unsuccessful cast around proceeded to the village of Shkharm. In some of my previous writings I think I mentioned a circumstance in connection with the travelling system of Wali Daud and myself. A system born of certain incidents in our past that were near to costing us our lives—once his and twice mine. The main item of our system was that, when “on the road” in such countries as those we never rode together. He would be quarter of a mile, sometimes more, behind, and when strangers were met—we did not know or recognize each other.

In the present instance, I rode alone towards the village, Wali was five hundred yards behind. There was no necessity to ask for the Malik or head-man as from the watch-tower—a feature of every village—the approach of strangers is observed long before their arrival.

I was on the point of dismounting but was not given the opportunity of doing so in the usual manner, for scarcely had I drawn rein when a big man dashed out from behind a *gamp* or thorn barrier shouting the name, “Sultani,” “Sultani,” and tearing my foot from the stirrup had me—not only out of the saddle but flat on my back in the mud before I had time to speak a word. The surprise in itself was startling enough, but added to the shock, I had no breath at all and was left speechless altogether. I made an attempt to get up, but the point of a long knife close to my throat and a pair of murderous eyes glaring down into mine persuaded me to reconsider the matter. At last I managed to gasp out a few words—“What is all this about? Who are you?”

The grinding reply was—

“*Asp-i-duzd! Kunzir! Halan-shuma ra Katal ba, Kum.*”  
("Horse-thief! Pig! Now, I will have your life")

By then a dozen others had run up all yelling “Horse-thief! horse-thief! kill, kill”—and many other welcoming expressions of the same kind. No use trying to speak. No one would listen, and had it not been for a diversion created by Wali Daud, it would certainly have been *finis* to my existence, for it was at that moment he rode up at a canter and pulling his horse to a halt alongside, called in a loud and authoritative voice—

“He—e, there! What is all this about?”

He was answered from all sides.

“Horse-thief! horse-thief! Cut his throat, cut his throat”

“Wait a minute, my brothers,” called Wali, sitting tall and stiff in his saddle “Have a little patience and listen to me”

The air of importance coupled with his commanding appearance caused the men to pause in their kind attentions to myself, then continuing “For I am in a position to assure you that to do as you so foolishly suggest, you will, one and all, suffer Yes, everyone of you. I have just arrived from Fughar and am instructed to let you know that our sacred Nullah, Haji Zarula, the blessed of Allah, lately returned from Mecca, will be here the day after to-morrow and I would advise you to keep this man for trial by him who is the great Hakim of Justice”

Although there was no doubt as to my being in a very ugly predicament, I could not help but admire the facile imagination of my friend, Wali, for I knew nothing about

that "sacred Mullah" nor did I ever hear his name before, but I knew Wali and his inventive power! However, it looked as if I were to have a reprieve for a day or so, as those wild fools, always amenable to priestly suggestions, not only held back but quietly returned their long knives to their belts Well, I would have a while longer to think of my sins and—anything might happen in the meantime.

I was hauled to my feet and hustled off in the midst of a dozen wild mountaineers towards the great *baourage* or tower that was the recognized prison and watch-tower of the range that included half a dozen villages in addition to Shkharm It was a strong, stone building about seventy-five feet high, in three stages, the highest being the "look-out" and signal post when danger was threatening, the middle was the prison, and the bottom or ground floor—at one time used as a guard-room but for many years now used as a refuge for the village goats and sheep

I was hauled and shoved up a rough ladder to the first floor in a manner that could hardly be called gentle, and thrown into a big bare room like a sack of rubbish There I was stripped of my *chogha* and boots, they had already taken my revolver, knife and fur cap As the men left and before barring the heavy door, I called to them—"Listen, you fools, I am not a horse-thief and—I am hungry! I want something to eat "

For some reason or other this seemed to amuse them, for they began to laugh Well, that was not a bad sign

When they had barred the door and gone down below I sat on the dirty boards of the floor, rubbing the several parts of my anatomy that seemed to have been the most obtrusive when kicks were being so lavishly and gratuitously bestowed a while ago

The room was forty feet long by twenty-five wide and twenty to the ceiling. There was one window or round hole that was probably intended to be a loop hole for shooting from. This was about two feet in diameter with thin iron bars across it. Not a scrap of anything else inside the four dirty walls.

Half an hour later I heard the heavy bars fall outside the door and a man came in with a good supply of *nan-i-dast* (thick chupatties made of roughly ground maize) and a large gourd of water.

"Here you are," he said, flinging the heap of chupatties on the floor—"eat and sleep for it is the last you will ever get," and with a cheerful grin on his hairy face, he swaggered out and slammed down the heavy bars. Having had as much of the rough food as I needed, I prowled round the big room for some time, thinking there might be some small chance of a way out. The round opening in the wall might be negotiated were it not for the bars, but even then there was a drop of over thirty feet outside and rough rocks to land upon. At any rate I would not give up hope as long as Wali Daud was on hand. I had every confidence in his tact, intelligence and courage. He dared not claim acquaintance with me, for by doing so they would have him by the heels also.

I was tired and very sore, so I curled up in the cleanest corner I could find and went to sleep. Some time during the night I awoke and, hearing voices, hauled myself up to the barred window. Two men were talking under the window, and from what they had to say I gathered they were guards or watchmen, one relieving the other.

It was so miserably cold that I found it impossible to sleep but in short naps, and passed most of the night prowling

and limping about my prison, my thoughts being of a quality the expression of which would not look nice on paper

All next day seemed, from the noise, bustle and general activity, that the whole village was employed in making arrangements for the appropriate reception of the sacred Mullah next day or so, explained my guard, when he opened the door to see if I was still alive

About 4 o'clock in the afternoon, half a dozen men entered my prison and hustled me down the ladder and out in the open where all the people of the village were assembled. Among them was an old man with a long, grey beard who seemed to be someone of importance. The same man who brought me the chupatties and water the previous day and who seemed to act as my jailer, hauled me in front of the old fellow who, after staring at me for a few minutes, spoke to the people about us

"My children, you have acted rightly. Hold the prisoner for judgment by the Mullah, who has been, by Allah, placed in the Seat of Justice"

Among the noisy rabble dragging me back to the tower, I caught sight once or twice of Wali Daud. I had a suspicion that there was some meaning in his actions, nor was I mistaken, for just as we got to the door where the crowd was milling and shouting, I distinctly caught the words in bad *Hindi* - "*Ratri! ratri! Hum ana, hum ana!*" ("Midnight, midnight, I come, I come") I was sure that he had a plan of some kind and it was up to me to be ready to assist—somewhere about midnight

When darkness fell, my room became more cold and miserable than ever, for it appeared that a storm of some kind was blowing up. Looking through the window hole, I saw that it was raining heavily and wondered if this might assist or interfere with whatever plan Wali was concocting

The hours passed slowly and miserably, and to keep my blood in circulation, I just padded around the filthy floor in my bare feet with all my senses on the alert.

It was about midnight that, notwithstanding the howling of the storm and the slashing of the rain in through the barred opening, I caught the sound of a dull or muffled tapping which, after some prowling, I located on the floor in one corner of the room. With the heel of my foot on the boards, I signalled in response. The tapping stopped and was immediately followed by the soft sound of something in the corner being prized upward between the floor and the wall. I was glad of the storm now, as it drowned any noise that Wali might make. I kept my hands feeling about in the dark corner and in the space of about five minutes they came in contact with the head of a wriggling object that I quickly recognized as an iron bar of about an inch in diameter. I pulled it up at once and found attached to it a considerable length of rope. This I dragged up at once, and understanding the suggestion lost no time in taking action. In a few minutes I had the rusty bars prized out of the opening and fixing the end of the rope on my own bar—that was some three feet long—to serve as a holdfast, I quietly dropped the other end through the hole and pushing myself out feet foremost fixed the bar across, and began to lower myself hand under hand until I got to the end of the rope, that I found must still be eighteen feet from the ground.

Fortunately, the night was dark and in addition it was raining hard with a cold wind tearing and howling about the old tower. I did not think twice about dropping the remainder of the distance to the ground, but just here things got mixed a bit as they generally do in the most inopportune moments, and in this case came near to spoiling our venture, for it was at the very moment I let go of the rope's end that a watchman, with his head well muffled up as a





I BREAK PRISON

*To Face Page 91*

protection against the cold wind, chose to pass just underneath Well, twelve and a half stone weight from a height of eighteen feet or so would be a shock to any man—even if he were prepared, but as it was that fellow gave one gasping grunt and lay still Next moment Wali Daud was by my side and dragged me to my feet Quickly pulling off the man's *chogha* and felt cap and throwing them to me, hissed, as he pointed up to the right

"Away in that direction the horses!" and to make things comfortable for the man on the ground he picked up a ten-pound boulder and administered an effective sleeping draught on his bare head

The fact of being in my bare feet did not prevent me from sprinting, and with the jailer's conical skin hat jammed on my head and his *chogha* trailing out from under my arm, I was by the horses as Wali overtook me With the *chogha* slung over my shoulder, he gave me a leg up on the big roan as she was without a saddle and we were off as hard as the horses could tear The rain, the cold and the storm were disregarded—or to be blessed for their assistance

After a break-neck gallop for a couple of miles or so over ground that I could not catch a glimpse of, I drew rein to rub the water from my eyes and to set some kind of a course other than that by which we had come, so as to throw off the pursuit that I was sure would follow I suggested to make for the river, twenty miles distant and due south, but Wali objected saying "In half an hour from now the big signal fires will blaze high from every village for miles around, especially in the direction you mention A hundred well mounted and armed men will be roaming those hills Our safest direction will be as we are now going"

"But," I objected, "that means over the *Wouraghi* Range! Impossible! I do not think that it has ever been

crossed How could we with the horses climb through snow and ice over that trackless range? "

"That is the very reason we will find it safe from pursuit It is the very last thing that those people would think possible" And towards the ice-bound *Wouraghi* we continued our flight

We had been riding at a good pace for half an hour more until the ground began to rise and become rough and broken, when we were forced to slow down Wali called my attention to what lay behind us I saw more than a dozen huge fires in a wide semi-circle to the south, east and west, but as Wali Daud knew there was no sign of any to the north—our way towards the *Wouraghi*

About 3 o'clock in the morning we found it nigh impossible to proceed with any degree of safety, so finding shelter under some high rocks we dismounted, and as for myself shivered miserably—for remember—I was barefooted—until a little daylight trickled between the rocks We mounted again and slowly wound our way in and out and around the rocks and through the snowdrifts, but ever on the ascent At last the gradient was so stiff and the ice so difficult for the horses' feet, that we were compelled to dismount and lead instead of ride them My feet were so cut about that further walking "barefoot" was out of the question I tore broad strips from the jailer's *chogha* and tied them around my feet—a little relief certainly but necessitating many strappings and readjustments It was a hard day's experience, but at any rate I was safe from the knives of Shkharmites

By the end of the day we were still about four thousand feet from the icy ridge of the range, and as we could not go any further we decided to pass the night as best we could among the rocks that provided us with some little shelter

Our only food was a maize chupattie each, washed down by sucking a piece of ice As for the poor horses they had to go hungry

The second morning after our escape, stiff with cold and hunger we crept upward through the mist towards that frozen ridge of the range where after a hard struggle we arrived about 4 o'clock in the afternoon There was neither the time nor inclination to rest so we began immediately to pick some kind of way of descent for the horses and ourselves, but knowing that every step we took was taking us out of the cold, we made no delay As it was winter-time, darkness had fallen at about 5-30 which forced us to find a resting place for the night the most likely being under the broad, overhanging ledge of a big rock that to some extent sheltered us from the rain, and there with the two horses we crouched close together for warmth

It was while we sat there that old Wali told me the whole story as to why I was seized and threatened with death, also as to his own part in the operations

It appeared that the mare was owned by a man named Halar Jan—the big fellow who first attacked me—she was stolen from him two weeks before, evidently by the man who sold him to me When I so “impudently” rode into the village, the owner recognizing his property was naturally “worked up” and did not for a moment consider why—if I were the thief—I should risk returning to the place from where I stole her! Evidently the gift of reasoning was not bestowed on Halar Jan.

As Wali, from a distance saw the crowd “milling” around someone on the ground and the mare standing apart without a rider, in his own prompt way he proceeded to take action as stated

Of course he might have drawn his revolver and dispersed the mob for a while, but it would be only for a while. He was too well acquainted with the fierce courage of those people to think that such action would be of any use. Tact and a little friendly bluff would go much further. He made it his business, as an envoy of the "sacred Mullah" to get on friendly terms with the villagers, so, during my imprisonment he had not been idle.

First, he located the stable in which the mare would be quartered and asked the permission of the owner to put his horse in or near the same place. To this there was no objection. He then surveyed the old tower carefully and noted all its possibilities. The rope and iron bar were found without much trouble. During the afternoon of the second day he strolled about the village in a casual manner and had a look in at the big room under the prison, where the goats and sheep were sheltered and into which they were now being driven as a storm was threatening.

At midnight when the storm was at its height, he went to the stable and saddled his own horse, then led out both to a distance of quarter of a mile or so towards the north, where he tied them among the bushes. The sheep room was his next objective, where in one corner he piled up a lot of fodder crates so as to reach the roof and force his iron bar up between the rotten boards and the wall. The remainder was up to me—with the exception of the "sleeping draught" administered to the jailer.

We were awakened just before dawn by the nickering of the mare and stamping of her feet. Still sitting with our backs to the rock, we were startled by a few loose stones rolling down from above our sheltering ledge. In a moment we were on our feet.

"Your revolver, I whispered to Wali. Without speaking he handed it to me whispering:

"Stay with the horses Do not move from here," then swiftly proceeded to remove his *chupphies* (sandals) and *chogha* and with his long knife ready in his *kammer* (waist cloth) crept away as silently as a snake

For close on half an hour I remained there speaking softly to the horses so as to keep them quiet As silently as he left, Wali now crept round the edge of our shelter and whispered "Two men! One is Halar Jan The loss of his mare has driven him to the crossing of the Mowraghi I don't think that he knows for certain that we have come this way as the rain and snow have hidden our tracks It is just a chance as they have drawn blanks on all the other roads I will go out again and watch them They may pass us or they may lose hope and return Meantime keep the horses quiet"—and he slid away as before, and during his absence a little adventure came my way to break the monotony of the cold and weary waiting

Wali had been gone close on half an hour when from the overhanging rock immediately over our shelter, half a dozen pebbles rolled over and dropped on the shale just in front of where I was standing, then came a heavy slithering sound from above, with quite a small cataract of shale and pebbles, in the middle of which a man's body fell with a thud and a groan practically at my feet that startled both horses and myself

The fellow was not dead! Just knocked out by the twenty-foot fall from the sloping ledge above!

Understanding in a flash that he must be one of the men trailing us, I thought it best to take care of him while he was unconscious The first thing was to gag and bind him for fear he might call out and attract the others, then relieve him of his big knife and pistol, and—what I most

needed—his long boots which I promptly got into, notwithstanding their three sizes too big

Not long after, Wali returned and stood looking at my capture for a few minutes When I explained he put on his *chupplies* and *chogha* in quite a leisurely way, and going round the rocks, climbed up on the ledge to examine the position as I thought He returned after a few minutes carrying a small skin sack Then turning the man over, he said

" Sahib—he is dead ! Neck broken "—and it was quite true Well, it might be callous to say it, but under the circumstances I could not be otherwise, for had the man got the chance he and his friend would have made short work of me

When we opened the small sack we felt we were in luck, for it contained a good supply of cold mutton, onions and chuppaties The horses had their share of the chuppaties

As we were about to start on our downward scrambling, I asked Wali

" What about Halar Jan ? "

" Oh," he replied with a grin, " he met with an accident over there "—pointing upward and away to the left—" and had to return to his home " Then to himself ruminatingly—" It is a long and difficult way and—probably he will find it troublesome "

I didn't ask any more questions, but Wali and I had travelled together for years I knew him !

Thanks to the little sack of food and to the man who so obligingly made us a present of it, we managed to put in another night on the range, but much lower down where

we were lucky to give the horses a bit of the "snow-burnt" grass often found on clay-soil from which snow has melted

On the fifth day after our escape from Shkharm we were clear of Mowraghi and within ten miles of a village named Fanda—in the province of Rughla. When it grew dark, I remained at a distance while Wali rode in and quietly arranged for the purchase of a few necessities—the principal of which was a saddle and a pair of *zorabs* and long boots that would fit me.

Our intention was now to travel towards the west for some fifty miles or so until we found an easy *pass* by which to re-cross the Mowraghi Range and work our way south—two hundred miles to Khairabad. Our only fear was that the Shkharm clans might take it into their heads to also ride for the same easy *pass* and meet us "head on"—and for this reason we resolved to ride by night *only* and lie up by day, avoiding the villages as much as possible, Wali only entering when necessary.

We were successful in crossing the range safely by the Maru Pass and were feeling a bit more at ease, but on Wali entering a small village some ten or a dozen miles south from the Pass, he heard that a large mounted and armed party called there two days before making enquiries, and describing ourselves and the mare. When the next day dawned we were many miles from that village and in a different direction to that taken by the riders.

For the next twelve days our experience was unique, as we rode by night, dodged many riding parties, went hungry and thirsty, and became adepts—in chicken stealing and once a goat, our cooking of a somewhat primitive kind—done behind rocks and in hidden ravines so that the light or smoke of our fires might not be seen.

One night as we were riding towards Zabak, three weeks after crossing the Mowraghi Range, I asked Wali Daud how he managed to get the mare out of her locked stable in Shkharm the night of our escape

"Well, Sahib," he replied with the suggestion of astonishment and even reproach in his voice, "after knowing me for years and being acquainted with my reputation, *you* to ask that question!"

"Of course, Wali," I hastened to reply, "but you must forgive me for forgetting. You see, all the excitement we have been through for the last few weeks has dulled my memory" Wali was very proud of his reputation

Well, once in Kila Drasin we were safe from the Shkharmites I lost a good Webley revolver, a new pair of boots, a warm *chogha* and a fur hat, but I *won* a splendid mare and—survived another adventure

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## THE STORMING OF THE MALAKAND PASS

THREE and forty years since then! Quite a little time as time goes, but quite long enough to render dim and misty events that at that time were of world-wide interest "The Storming of the Malakand—the famous Pass"—that led from British territory into the country of Swat and the Mohmand, the people of which boasted that though the British had succeeded in forcing their way over many passes into other Frontier lands, the crossing of the Malakand was beyond their power. It was never crossed by any force, ancient or modern, and never would be.

There may be a few of the old crowd still alive—though I fear pretty well scattered about the world—and for those, if they happen to read this little story, I have no doubt but that old memories will awake and, judging by my own feelings, a longing for the old days to be back with their glorious thrill of joyous youth and excitement, when we fought our way in that heart-breaking rush with "GATACRE'S FLYING COLUMN" over those rugged mountain passes, through rushing rivers, scorching valleys, snow-swept hills and wild fanatic tribes.

In the early months of 1895, our troops began to assemble at Hoti Mardan. I was one of the first to arrive there with orders to report myself to Colonel Battye, commanding the Guides, for further instructions. It was from him that I first learned of the projected expedition for immediate despatch to the relief of a garrison of our troops who were shut up in the old fort of Chitral—a few hundred miles beyond the Frontier of India.

In a few days the Brigades were in readiness to start, when it was found that our transport arrangements were not satisfactory—insufficient animals

My immediate Chief, Colonel Bond, sent for me and suggested that as I spoke Pukhtu fluently I might be able to arrange for the hire of transport animals in the district around Mardan, Jallala, Amardan and Porda. I undertook the job, and as the places mentioned were all friendly I started out with my old Duffadar, Wali Daud, and a few volunteers. Old Wali was an interesting character and astonishingly resourceful. Before he joined the army he was famous as a border horse-thief and extremely proud of it.

We were very successful and in two days managed to hire and send into Mardan a thousand camels, two hundred mules and three hundred pack bullocks. Towards evening of the third day, just as it began to rain, the Duffadar and I rode into the village of Dargai at the foot of the Malakand where I hoped to hire another two hundred mules and pack ponies, quite ignorant of the fact that at that moment hundreds of the tribesmen were gathering on the heights above us. Our welcome could hardly be considered as cordial.

The Lombardar or Headman—a long stringy old man, with a scraggy red beard, one eye and a twisted nose, without rising from his *charpai* gruffly returned my salutation and snapped out some questions

"Who are you?" "What do you want, and why do you ride into my village as if it were your own?" "Do you think you are the Amir of Afghanistan?" Well, for a beginning this did not sound hopeful—still ride the old copy-book about the "soft words turning away wrath" and so forth—I invented a smile or two of the greasy kind and told him who we were and our business

Then that beautiful specimen, suppressing his spleen a little, began to ask us questions in connection with the number of troops, guns, supplies, etc., we had in Mardan, I cheerfully gave him quite a lot of information of a quality the most weird and was most ably backed up by the Duffadar, a past master in such diplomacy

As questions and answers were passing, a man came at the run from the north entrance to the village, with some news for the Lombardar, that seemed to be of a very exciting nature, and as he told it he kept pointing backwards towards the Malakand

Not only old redwhiskers but the crowd of men that was around us hastened away towards the north gate, leaving us alone and unnoticed as we sat in our saddles. We being mounted, had a better view of the surroundings than the others, and looking in that direction towards the hills we caught sight of a dozen well-armed riders coming towards the village at a furious pace

That—taken with the tone of our welcome—was quite enough for me. Seeing that all the attention was towards the on-coming, I whispered to Wali Daud

“Come! and ride like the devil”

“You go, Sahib,” he replied, “south gate, I will catch up soon”—saying which he quietly slipped from the saddle and leading his horse, disappeared down a narrow lane between the houses, I had every confidence in my old horse-thief’s intelligence and acted accordingly

Being well mounted on a “full-blood Arab,” I made for the south gate where a man stood with a rifle under the shelter of a *chupper* (an open structure with a thatched roof). He lazily came out, whether to see who it was or to stop me I could not say, for he had scarcely got out, when my



As we still jogged along at a quick walk I noticed that Wali was riding in an awkward manner, not in his usual upright style

"What is the matter?" I asked "Are you hurt that you ride like that?"

He only chuckled and held something from the "off" side of his horse

"What is it?" I asked

"Our dinner," he replied

On closer view I saw that what he held up was a cooking pot such as is to be found in every Pathan household

"Come, Sahib," Wali said, "dismount and have some dinner, for like myself, you must be hungry, and I will tell you all about it after"

And what we found in the pot was an excellent stew of some kind which, being very hungry, we thoroughly appreciated

As soon as it was finished, Wali threw the empty pot aside, and having wiped our fingers—I on my handkerchief, Wali on the tail of his coat—we mounted and at a good pace continued on our way in the direction of Jalalla. As we rode, Wali gave me an account of his doings, his deep voice and staccato style in strong contrast to his whimsical expression

"You remember, Sahib," he began, "as we entered the village by the west gate I caught sight of an old lady standing in the doorway from which there came a strong smell of cooking" I remembered it "When those others all ran towards the north gate and you gave the order to ride, I resolved to get a share of what was or should

be nicely cooked by then I went for it, but the lady was not at all amiable As there was no time to reason with her, I caught up an old blanket I saw in the corner and rolled it around her head Before she could get free I had the pot from near the fire and was quickly away around the house, in the dark, to where I had left my horse I left by the west gate while they were shooting after you at the south gate The rain was heavy there, and the way dark At last, I circled to the south and suddenly came on a riderless horse This one, Sahib—I searched about for a while and found—as I suspected—a man lying on the ground, his horse had thrown him He was *bchosh* (unconscious). I searched him and found that packet and a few other trifles, I also collected his rifle cartridges and horse, that it would not be safe to leave there, for some thief to steal And that is all, Sahib—but, that goat *pilao* was good."

We reached Jalalla about 4 a.m and, having attended to the horses, went to sleep for a couple of hours.

Later on I was curious to see what the packet, that the Dufiadar had "*borrowed*" from the unconscious man, contained Among half a dozen sheets of paper containing the names and addresses of men, and lists of things to be obtained, such as saddlery from Cawnpore, waterproof sheets, a dozen tents (Army Pattern), etc , there was a letter in Pukhtu, to some man by name Bakhlo Khan Akram, instructing him to find out the names of the subordinates who were to accompany the Political Officer, Major Deane, and to do all in his power to "arrange matters with them," and some of the other stuff, all of which I thought important enough to hand up to our Commander on our return to Hati Mardan that day. The same afternoon I learnt that the man Bakhlo Akram, to whom the letter was addressed, was of considerable standing and influence in Mardan He was arrested and his house searched, which led to the arrest

of half a dozen others He was an extremely active agent of Umra Khan of Jandol whose tribesmen were out to oppose our troops, so—Wali Daud's little acquisitive propensities turned out to be useful this time

Three days later, Sir Robert Lowe, having advanced our force to Dargai, decided to attack the Malakand that was strongly held by the tribes of Swat and in Jandol with a strong contingent of Mohmands in support—the whole force about twenty thousand strong and armed with modern rifles to more than fifty per cent

The second Brigade, commanded by General Waterfield, was in the van, supported by the first Brigade under General Kinloch, while the third Brigade under General Gatacre was to be held in reserve The enemy held the whole crest of the Pass, their extended defences being about a mile and a half, while a series of stone breastworks one above the other were constructed down the several spurs so that the enemy could retire from one to the other hurling down huge rocks on our men

Our regiments engaged were the Gordon Highlanders, Scottish Borderers, Guides and Sikhs of the second Brigade, the Bedfords, Rifles, Gurkhas, Sikhs and Dogras of the first Brigade, also the mountain batteries that played a most important part in the battle

We, of the third Brigade, sat our horses with the best possible patience—which was not much—and watched the fight through our glasses, hoping for the order to advance

The order of attack was masterly The Guides and Gurkhas were to scale the precipitous heights on the extreme right of the enemy's position On gaining the crest, they were to turn inward to the left and sweep on, taking the enemy in flank while the frontal attack was pushed home

So steep and jagged was the ascent that the regiments took four hours of terrible struggle before they had captured the last *sangar*, and scaled the heights

The Borderers and Highlanders had meanwhile been employed in the frontal attack, each taking a separate spur. It was a glorious sight to see the splendid dash with which the two Scottish regiments rushed the hill. The Bedfords, Rifles, and Sikhs, with the Dogras in support on the left, kept the tribesmen in check—the shells from the mountain guns smashing the heights above. The upward struggle of our men ranged to a height of about four thousand feet, for the most part on a grade of one in three. It was this steepness that to a great extent saved our men from the enemy's overhead fire, but they suffered much from the hurled down boulders.

The spirited manner in which our regiments rushed *sangar* after *sangar*, and arrived just beneath the final ridge before the tribesmen had time to realize that the assault was at their very feet, was beyond praise.

As soon as all was ready—with bayonets fixed and a mighty cheer, the crest—which from below appeared impregnable—was carried with the bright steel, three British regiments reaching the stronghold at the same time.

Thus brilliantly was carried the first obstacle that lay in the path of the "Relief Force."

The redoubtable Malakand Pass was conquered at last, and for the first time in history

The battle lasted eight hours, and one must not forget the stirring bravery of the enemy that for the whole day withstood a searching and well-directed shell fire from three mountain batteries and still were firm enough to stand a furious bayonet charge at the end.

From records it was calculated that the tribes lost three thousand killed and wounded that day, and our own losses, though nothing like that, were quite heavy enough, but taking into consideration the nature of the terrain and defences, were small indeed

As a change from the excitement of battle I may relate a small incident that will be of interest later

The same night, having had some matter of urgency with the Transport Officer of the first Brigade that was in bivouac on the head of the Pass, I started alone from Dargai about 10 p m by a goat track that appeared to be the only definite way—but months after was discovered to be the old Budhist road teeming with archaeological specimens in sculptured stone, of Grecian statuary, etc , that proved it to be one of the routes of Alexander's march to India

Half way up the hill my horse wandered from the track with the result that we found ourselves floundering about in dense scrub Nearing the top of the Pass, we came upon several dead bodies—evidently victims of our shell fire For the most part they seemed to be sleeping men, but others with limbs contorted and wide open glassy eyes, staring, in the bright moonlight, lent a weird atmosphere to the lonely scene

Our progress came to a sudden stop before a huge mass of rock that had in some far-distant time become displaced and rolled into the track

I sat in the saddle considering the situation and wondering why my horse should suddenly prick up his ears and turn his head as if trying to look over the rock—when I was startled by hearing from the other side the unmistakable sound of a woman's voice Like my horse, I was all ears and on guard in a moment I listened intently for a minute and

caught some words softly spoken as if the speaker—undoubtedly a woman—in pacifying tones was reasoning with someone else who would not reply Quietly dismounting and fixing the reins to the saddle ring, I crept around the big rock, revolver in hand

The long years that have passed since that night have not dimmed the memory of the scene that met my eyes as I glanced about A tall Jandoli girl, of some twenty years of age, with hands clasped before her, stood looking down at, and talking to a man lying before her on the ground, his face upturned to the moonlight, but he did not hear her pleading words or sincere promises He was dead

This is the vein in which she wandered

" And that evening—by the streamlet under the hill—just as the sun was going down—we gathered the peach blossoms for Amooria, my blind sister—you took me in your arms—and as now—' a deep sigh '—with the light of love in those dear eyes—Ah ! my heart ! you must be tired—so very tired—yes, you must sleep—sleep well and in peace, while I watch by you I will pray—pray it Oh, Ahmed ! I feel so lonely and my heart is—so—full "

Slow and soft her voice stumbled on and on for a long time What was I to do ? Thinking that it would be best to wake her from her sad dreaming, with a few kind words I stepped forward, and moving close to where she stood spoke gently—

" Zanaki " (equal to " Mademoiselle "), the night is passing and it will be best for you to go down from here before the daylight comes "

Without stirring from her position or looking at me she continued her sad monologue—" Daylight ! daylight !

SHE FOUGHT BESIDE HER LOVER IN THE BATTLE





Hush ! he sleeps, he sleeps well, and when he awakes my daylight will come ”

“ But, Zanaki,” I tried again, “ our soldiers will come at daylight to carry the dead away ”

At this she suddenly swung round and faced me with—I may be pardoned for strong language—the light of hell in her eyes

“ Who are you ? Why do you come to this sacred spot while my heart sleeps—Ah ! I know , you are one of the Kaffir dogs that put my heart to sleep and sent my soul to hell ! But wait, wait a little while and he will awake again to life and joy when these hills are red , you hear ' red ' ! with the foul blood of you dogs Go ! Go at once ! your foul presence pollutes the sacred air about me Go ! ” and suddenly stooping she drew the long *peshkauz* or Khyber knife from the waist cloth of her dead lover, and facing me with the glittering steel gripped in her strong hand, she looked a true emblem of the furies

I did not bother much about her knife as I could have shot it from her fingers—so I tried again—“ But look here,” I began—she took two steps towards me—and I took the hint, and moved around the rock In a moment I was in the saddle and had turned into the bracken, but at a short distance I halted and calling to the girl—“ Alright, Zanaki, I am going now and will send the Gurkha sepoys here at once *Har Kullah Aosa* Good-bye ”

For the next two days there were a few engagements in the Khar Valley and the usual sniping, but on the third day it looked as if there was some big show to take place

The first Brigade with General Kinloch was left to look after the captured Malakand and the Khar Valley

The second and third Brigades were to cross the Swat River and move up to Uch with all speed possible

There was a recognized ford close to a small place called Chakdara, but the enemy had entrenched themselves in thousands on the other side in a position that fully commanded the ford which at this point was about three hundred yards wide but only three and a half feet deep, while towards the east and west it was much deeper

Although our mountain guns kept up a lively barrage on the hills across the river at a range of about two thousand yards, it had but little effect on the enemy, that having had plenty of cover there where they lay quietly awaiting the advance of our Infantry that they intended to annihilate while wading through the ford, and as our men would not be able to use their rifles while wading, they would be at the mercy of the tribesmen—*not much mercy*

For some hours everybody sat about in the shelter of the rocks facing the river, waiting for something to happen. There seemed to be a most unsatisfactory feeling of "stale-mate" to the situation. To send the Infantry would be sheer immolation, and Cavalry without Infantry support was not to be thought of

I had nothing to do, so I sat down behind a rock like the others with the reins in my hand. It was behind a spur that ran down from the Shahkot, and about seven hundred yards from the river. Here old Wali Daud found me and, squatting down beside me, grumbled

"What is everyone waiting for, Sahib?" he asked. "Do we not cross the river to-day?" After I had explained the situation he grunted something that sounded like "*Khalak annukh de*," which means "people don't understand" (a polite rendering)

"Sahib," he said, "as you are probably aware, I know all this country well, for in the good old days my friends and I had many glorious 'drives' through these hills and valleys in the pursuit of my honourable profession. Therefore, I know of another place where our horses used to cross by swimming, but where it is not exposed to shooting."

This promised to be useful, so I took him to the Brigade Major who through his glasses was observing the effect of shell fire on the enemy's position. He explained matters to the General who wrote a note and told us to give it to the Cavalry Commander, if we could find him. I found him with the 11th Bengal Lancers and the Guides Cavalry where they were waiting, like everyone else, for something to happen. All were under cover of the low spurs of the hills, about five hundred yards to the east. The two Commanders having read and discussed the General's note, orders were passed to the troops for all to mount! Wali and I were asked to lead the way. The old horse-thief led us back through many ravines, quite hidden from view of the enemy, and brought us to a halt behind a low hill, from the top of which it was seen that we were only about four hundred yards from the river. While lying among the scrub on top of the ridge we could see that earthworks of some kind had been thrown up on the opposite bank, behind which some of the enemy could be seen moving, but apparently unsuspecting of our being so near. Still it was evident that the defence of this place was not neglected, though it was nothing near so formidable as the regular one.

Both regiments now formed up in readiness under cover of the ridge, every man tense and grim with eagerness, as instructions were passed along

Lances were lowered and swords drawn, while even the horses seemed to sense the coming struggle

When all was ready, a signal only was given and out on the plain we swept, where opening out in extended order—the Guides on the right—we charged straight for the river, into which we plunged without drawing rein. Our charge was a complete surprise to the tribesmen on the other side, but those people are never slow in coming into action. As we floundered, splashed and swam towards them we were met by a galling fire that, empty saddles, a sore loss of men, and horses that were wounded, maddened and uncontrolled, littered and clogged the river to such an extent that the utmost care and dexterity had to be exercised to prevent our horses and ourselves from being fouled, washed down and smothered in the awful caldron of churned-up foam and blood. In midstream, though half blinded with spume and flying-spray thrown up by the splashing and plunging horses, I suddenly caught sight of a mop of fair hair that could only belong to a European as his body was being whirled along between the lunging chargers. Forcing my horse near him I managed to grip his hair, pulling his head above water, but he was not dead or even wounded, just half smothered. I managed to get him to the bank and left him there with some other dismounted men, as I saw there was some exciting business before us.

One thing in our favour was, that those tribesmen have a holy horror of the lance and sword in a cavalry charge, so that while we were still fifty yards from their bank they bolted and foolishly made off over the plain and straight up the Uch Valley. As soon as we reached the bank and scrambled out of the water we shook ourselves together into some sort of formation, and hardly waiting for the word of command broke into a wild cheer—more like a vindictive yell of rage—and were after them out on the plain. That wild and glorious skirmishing charge up the valley for miles, was an experience with a thrill to be remembered. They doubled and dodged like rabbits trying to reach the hills on

both sides, but were invariably cut off. They formed into groups of a dozen or so whenever the chances offered and dropping to the ground, shot at us as we charged, but to take a useful aim at a charging cavalry man with lowered lance or flashing sword is not easy.

Just here I had rather an unpleasant experience. Side by side with a man that was well known on many such macpaigns, Major Roddy Owen—who was acting as a war correspondent—and like myself had no right to be where he was—we rode past one of these groups bending low we emptied our revolvers into their midst. A hundred yards onward we both turned in the saddle to look back and see results, and naturally failed to see what was in front—the next moment we and our horses were rolling down a sand-cutting of about four feet deep. In a second we were desperately struggling to get out before some of the "Swatties," seeing our predicament, would seize the opportunity and dispose of us. Getting to our feet and reloading our revolvers as fast as possible, we put our heads above the bank and were just in time to see the end of an interesting duel. A "Swattie" armed with a long curved sword and a round shield was fiercely attacking one of our *sowars* (native cavalry man), who rather surprised me by the awkward manner in which he was trying to use his cavalry sword while his horse stood at a little distance. A moment after catching sight of this little drama, the *sowar* suddenly jumped back and flung his sword straight at his opponent, at the same time diving at the other's legs which he gripped and had him down in a second. I caught the flash of the long Khyber knife, and with a bound he was on his feet, but the "Swattie" remained where he was.

The *sowar* came running towards us, not a *sowar* at all, but our old Wali Daud—the mule Duffadar. No wonder he did not know how to use the cavalry sword. He helped us to

get our horses out of the ditch and there being no time to attend to the considerable gravel rash areas on ourselves and our horses, we got to saddle at once and were to the front again—if it might be called “front”, but in reality the scrimmage had resolved itself into a scattered skirmish of many fights all over the valley

After a little way, noticing that Wali and I were alone, I turned back and saw that Roddy Owen’s horse was lame

“No good,” he called, “I must join the others and get another mount”—(there were plenty galloping about riderless)

As Wali Daud and I rode on the left side of the valley towards a ridge, a shot came from some rocks a couple of hundred yards away. Not seeing anyone and being intent on getting out of the broken ground, we rode on until, turning the end of the ridge, Wali called my attention to two riders that dashed out from the rocks. One was a big man riding a grey, the other on a small chestnut “Kabuli”

“Get him, Sahib,” Wali yelled. “It is Daulat Khan”

“Who is Daulat Khan?” I asked

“He is the brother of the Bajauri Chief, one of our first enemies, I know him well, I have a good cause to,” was his reply

As I before mentioned, I was riding a splendid Arab that I knew would catch the others after a clear run of a few hundred yards. When within twenty yards, I took a flying shot at the big chap who took no notice, but rode straight on. I would not fire again, as I thought it would be best to take him prisoner, but there was no necessity. I was very much surprised a moment later, when I saw the man roll sideways out of the saddle, the grey circling to a halt as the man still held the reins. Leaving him with Wali,

I rode past after the other whose nimble little "Kabuli" was much more handy through the rocks and broken ground than my Arab. For five hundred yards he led, then turned a sharp bend into a defile. Ten seconds later I was round the same corner and just escaped a bullet that sang past. The chase was over. The rider had dismounted and was standing by his little mount that had just got up from the ground where it had stumbled and thrown its rider, who now stood with a smoking pistol in his hand. I was about to throw up my revolver but quickly lowered it again. The rider was the Jandoli girl of the Malakand, I sat there staring at her, I don't think she recognized me until I spoke.

"Zanaki—*staramusha!* Why are you here? I left you on the Malakand three nights ago, you are a fool to be here!"

"I told you, Kafir, that I would have my revenge, and my revolver is empty!"

"Who was your companion?" I asked.

"That does not concern you—I am waiting—shoot!"

"Zanaki, you *are* a fool. I have no desire to harm you, but how will you get away from the *sowars*?"

"There is no difficulty now if you," but I cut in—"Oh! you may go, and as soon as you can mount—now—go, I will stay here until you are away!"

She was quickly on her Kabuli, and looking steadily at me for a moment she raised her hand saying "*Har Kullah Aosa*" (Kafir! we will meet again), and disappeared through the defile. I rode back to find Wali Daud standing by the dead man swearing, while holding the reins of the grey with his own horse.

"It is not Daulat Khan after all," he grumbled. At any rate, he must have been someone of importance, as indicated by the richness of his dress and the silver mountings.

of his equipment Seeing there was no further use in going onward, I called to the Duffadar to come along I rode back and joined some others who were on their return to the river with the wounded Leaving the valley littered with about four hundred dead and wounded "Swatties"

As soon as the tribesmen holding up the crossing of the Infantry at the main ford saw that the Cavalry had effected a crossing and would soon be after them, they began to vacate their position and retreat to the higher hills towards the *Katagola*

The subsequent crossing of the river by our Infantry was effected but with little adventure, but with some humorous incidents, some of which were the cause of orders being issued that all snapshots of the Highlanders crossing were to be destroyed The reason for this being, of course, obvious Having packed their cartridges and accoutrements high on their shoulders to keep them from getting wet, and also wishing to keep their skirts dry, tucked them well up, and so in staggering lines, holding hands so as to prevent being swept off their feet by the strong current, they succeeded, with several duckings, in getting over

That night in bivouac, near the village of Uch, while interviewing a tin of "bully-beef" with a friend, Wali Daud came along and now substantiated his boast of being an "honest horse-thief," by leading forward the grey mare, the property of the man we had chased, and with a satisfied ring he also proudly showed us a quantity of silver-mounted stuff, that he said he had *bought* from the owner who did not need it any more

That grey mare turned out to be the best polo pony I ever possessed

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## MAQHMA DIN

### THE FIREBRAND OF THE GULISTAN RANGES

THE region was terrorized and disorganized by a certain ambitious and enterprising spirit, a man of the Raghuzai, who bore the name of Maqhma Din, and was known as the " Sirdar "

He, with a well-armed and mobile force of some 2,500 wild and daring tribesmen, had for months been riding the ranges from Koh-i-Saifulla by Parachinar, Thal, Gulistan and even to the neighbourhood of Hongu, with a cheerful and grinning disregard to the repeated remonstrances and warnings of our Frontier Political Authorities, who were, by the inhabitants, considered responsible for the general welfare and safety of the Border

The " Sirdar " insisted and proclaimed far and wide that the ranges through which he rode were his own country, which of late years had had no one of sufficient strength of character—in fact a wise and capable Ruler—to look after the interests of the people—" his people " He, accordingly, constituted himself as the only " man of force and character " to undertake the responsibility

Rather specious reasoning, but quite in accordance with the tradition of the East So, having collected his willing tribesmen, he proceeded to " look after the people's interest " by a lavish and indiscriminate application of fire and sword, a process which did not appear to have been duly appreciated by the people

The situation created great unrest the Frontier Authorities being blamed for their inactivity and dilatory methods, when prompt and vigorous action was the obvious remedy

At last, as a crowning achievement to his unchecked depredations, he made a sudden and unexpected attack on a certain small picket-outpost on the Samana, defended by a native Officer and twenty Sikhs, which after a stout resistance was captured every one of its brave defenders being slain, and their stripped and mutilated bodies utilised to ornament the surrounding trees

At last our "hill-top" Powers were disturbed by the loud and angry plaints of the people, with the result that the word went forth for the despatch of a small force of Indian Troops under the command of a Brigadier to assemble at Kohat—that well-known Frontier town that has been the assembly-ground for many Frontier Campaigns during the past seventy years

My job with the force was the charge of six troops of Army Transport mules from Rawalpindi After the usual excitement and hectic hustle of entraining the none too tractable mules, we arrived at about 3 a m one morning at Kushalgarh, which in those days was the railway terminus

In the cold and darkness of the early morning we detrained our mules, and as quickly as possible began preparations for our first day's onward march to Kohat and managed to get started by 5-30 a m

On arrival in camp that evening, a somewhat unpleasant situation occurred, at least, as far as it concerned myself I lost my dinner—and to a hungry soldier that means a consideration But the cause of my loss was of much more consequence to someone else

In all the hustle and confusion at Kushalgarh of getting stores and supplies packed and loaded on the mules, I had no time to have more than a mug of stewed tea before starting, the result being that by the time we arrived in camp I was very hungry indeed, but remembering the leg of cold roast mutton and loaf of bread packed in my small mess-box, I solaced myself in anticipation of a good meal later on—but I reckoned without my “boy,” a servant I had engaged before leaving Rawalpindi

As soon as my mules were watered, picketed and fed, I yelled for the “boy” to fetch the mess-box, but he was not to be found anywhere about the camp. When half an hour or so passed, and still no trace of him, I came to the conclusion that he had “jibbed” at the idea of the difficulties that, judging from the small experience he had, lay before him for many months to come, and thought it best to turn back while he had the opportunity. In all probability he had heard stories from the Punjabi muleteers of long, tiresome marches through intense cold and all kinds of hardships and misery usually experienced in the wild and rugged Frontier mountains, where the blood-thirsty Pathans are forever lurking behind rocks in readiness to pounce on anyone that might be an easy prey, and carve him up with their big knives. But, whatever the reason, he was gone!

The muleteer, on whose animal my little mess-box was packed, informed me that my servant had taken the box from off his mule when about half the distance from Kushalgarh, saying that I wanted some food. He did not see him again.

Well, a man must have some food—so I had to scrounge some chuppatties from the muleteers and *borrowed* a tin of bully-beef from one of the ration-boxes carried by the mules. Of course, I paid it back—later on!

Two days later, while in camp at Kohat, the Provost-Marshal looked me up and gave me the information that the body of a man who was supposed to have been my servant was found among some rocks through which the road ran from Kushalgarh. My little mess-box was found close by, containing a few enamel articles and a well-picked mutton bone.

From all appearances, it was reasoned that the poor devil became very hungry, and unable to resist the temptation of my leg of mutton, which he himself had packed, took the box from off the mule, and having carried it to the shelter of the rocks, helped himself to the contents, after which he probably lay back for a sleep before returning to Kushalgarh, and here some murderous rascal of a prowling Pathan—of which there were hundreds to be found along that part of the Frontier—found him, and could not resist the temptation of putting a foot of steel through his chest, and after relieving him of all his clothing, in addition to the best part of my camp-cooking gear, went merrily on his way.

Kohat—ordinarily a quiet and picturesque little Frontier town—was now turned into a noisy hive of confusion, crowded with every war-like activity—not only thousands of troops of the several branches of the Service, but a like number of Indian Camp followers with thousands of animals, mostly for transport work. The lordly, but *odoriferous* camel, when not squealing, grunting and harshly complaining, stalked through the camp with a supercilious, haughty air, emphasized by an occasional blubbering remark of the most disgusting nature, just to show his contempt towards the universe in general. Cavalry horses and transport mules were gentlemanly in every way, but emphatic in the expression of their needs, as throwing up their heads now and then they nickered and neighed in

their standings, intimating that it was time their nosebags were brought around, while the pack bullocks and donkeys quietly munched at *bhoosa* scrapings in their patient, stolid and thoughtful manner that seemed to consider all the hurry, noise and excitement as but a troublesome phase that would pass in a short time

The Brigade Staff selected for its own camp, the high ground overlooking the town where the conditions were dry and comfortable, but the troops, with some three thousand animals of all kinds, had to do the best they could among ploughed fields churned into a quagmire of slush a foot deep, as it had been raining steadily since our arrival four days previous

In fact, the wretched weather and miserable conditions surrounding, were responsible for the regrettable fall from virtue of an estimable man—Sergeant Phelim O'Flynn of the Connaught Rangers—one of our transport assistants. It was about 8 p m that finding nothing better to do, I closed up my little 40-lb tent and only pulling off my long boots, crawled between a couple of damp blankets. After unsuccessfully trying to read an old newspaper by the flickering light of a candle stump, I was just about to fall asleep, when a sudden and violent agitation of my tent, coupled with impatient remarks, caused me to jump from the blankets, and I quickly realized that someone was trying to scramble in under the tent-fly. The timely reply to my indignant challenge came in the unmistakable brogue of O'Flynn, which saved him a healthy crack on his bullet skull with the tent-peg mallet I was affectionately handling. "Ah! shure it's only meself. The danged pegs of me tent couldn't hould in the yards of mud and it cum down on the top o' me, fast asleep—so I had to come along for a night's shelter—and shure, I've brought along a ddrop to comfort us this God-forsaken night"—saying which he sat on the

ground in a very muddy state and hauled out a quart bottle, half full of brandy, from his overcoat pocket

"Good for you, O'Flynn," I said, "but I did not know that you could buy any liquor in Kohat?"

"And that's thru too, but—buy it—did you say? Oh! no—no place here to buy any, but I have an auld chum here in the telegraph department who for auld times' sake lent me a bottle from his own supply that was sint up from 'Pindi' As the night was wet, cold and miserable, I was very glad to share his "comfort" as he called it

Next morning, orders for our advance having been received, there was commotion and excitement everywhere in camp, all showing eagerness and pleasure at the prospect of getting away from the mire through which we had struggled for the past few days

I was very busy selecting and supplying the regulation number of transport animals required by the various units, when I observed the very fat and excited Hospital Baboo, accompanied by the Medical Officer, wading towards me through the mud and slush which appeared to have been plentifully plastered all over his legs and dhoti. His antics were rather amusing as he, in fear and trepidation, dodged through the restless mules that appeared to be in a playful humour that morning, and seemed to take a delight in selecting the close vicinity of his corpulent person for exuberant exhibitions of kicking

Out of respect and consideration for Colonel Moore, the Medical Officer, I sent half a dozen *drabies* (muleteers) to clear a way for them

The Baboo in a very excited state began to explain matters by spluttering—"The brandy—one bottle—being subtract from hospital comforts-box by damn, no trusting

mule man " when the Colonel signing him to stop, explained that the Baboo, on checking stores that morning, found that one of the boxes had been tampered with, and a full bottle of brandy was missing. The Baboo emphatically declared that it must have been one of my *drabes* who was the culprit.

It was fortunate that since marching from Kushalgarh I had not shaved, so that the scrub of beard and the dirt, undoubtedly, combined to hide the blush that I felt burning my cheeks.

I had no further difficulty in locating the "auld chum" from whom O'Flynn obtained his gift for "auld times' sake."

On hearing the Colonel's statement, the hardened wretch stood quietly by, and even had the nerve to express his indignant disapproval of the thief as "swine!!!" I did not notice any sign of a blush on *his* stolid Irish mug.

Of course, I promised to do all in my power to find out who committed the theft and see that he was suitably punished, and in the meantime suggested that in future all medical stores of such a nature should be stacked under the surveillance of the guard.

On the departure of the Colonel and his Baboo, I returned to have a word or two with O'Flynn, but from his sudden show of energy among the mules, he must have found some very important work requiring his personal attendance there.

Three days later, our Brigade pitched camp on the outskirts of Hongu, a busy little town that was considered the meeting place and general market for the surrounding

tribes—Waziris, Mahsuds, Shahu Khels and Sturis Khels. It had no less than four watch towers and seemed so well defended otherwise that, at any rate, it could protect itself from the tax collecting persuasions of the "Protector," who showed no particular desire to force his claims in that direction. As to the smaller and more distant villages and homesteads, things were far different, and there the "protecting" power of the "Sirdar" was keenly felt, but with no great degree of enthusiastic gratitude.

We remained in camp at Hongu for three days, during which time our scouts were not idle, and much information was collected as to the general situation and movements of the "Sirdar."

Numbers of men, women and children, whole families, flying from their homes with whatever belongings they could carry away, came to the town daily for protection, and brought tales of cruelty and oppression.

The "Sirdar" and his men rode the ranges with daring impunity, levying a heavy toll on every village and home, speciously intimating that it was but a small and "just" tax for the maintenance and upkeep of "his small force" of men and horses, organized for the protection of the people and the country, but God help anyone who demurred as to paying up! One instance of such an event occurred the month previous. Two children—a boy of eleven and a little girl of nine—were abducted. They belonged to an Indian *shroff*, or native banker, by name Mohan Dur, who refused to pay the tax demanded as being unjust and unauthorised. This man was born, brought up and had lived in the village of Burkhad, some fifteen miles north of Hongu, for forty years. He was informed by a messenger from the "Sirdar" that his children would be restored to him on his paying a ransom of ten thousand rupees. The

ransom was duly paid and the children sent back—*each minus one hand*—severed at the wrist! The reason stated being, that the money was not paid until half an hour after the stipulated time, and as a warning to others against delay

From the many stories of outrage and cruelty perpetrated by this monster and his followers, the only conclusion one could come to was that they were a band of murderous lunatics that should be wiped from the face of the earth at the earliest opportunity, and in this I felt sure, that in the accomplishment of such a laudable work every man in our Force was firmly resolved to do all that lay in his power

It was quite obvious that the "Sirdar's" spies were not idle either, for by his actions he seemed to be fully cognizant of all our movements as shown by the nature of his own. As day by day our advance drew nearer to the region of his activities, he retreated into the fastness of the wild Samana range above and beyond Bahiamin where nature provided him with such strategical positions of defence, such as a tangle of rocky hills, stupendous cliffs, insurpassable gorges, narrow ravines and dark caverns, with which being well acquainted, he would take every advantage for action and defence, cover and retreat, as desired

As for the difficulties and dangers that our troops would have to face in such a locality—well—it had to be done. And our Commander was the man to tackle the job

But even the cleverest Commanders make mistakes sometimes, and it was just here that a bad one was made by someone in authority, probably too eager and over-zealous in his desire to get to grips with the "Sirdar"

A Company of Gurkhas, sixty-eight in number, was sent from Baliamin after dark by a "forced march" up the Rughza defile with instructions to scout through that section of the range and try to locate and draw the enemy, while two other Companies were ostentatiously marched towards another point of approach with the object of misleading the watchers from the hills. But the watchers from the hills were not misled, for out of that Company of sixty-eight men only twenty-nine returned. The naked and mutilated bodies of the remainder were strewn among the rocks for the vulture and jackal to bury.

It was not a useful experiment. Had the person who sent these men on that mission been better acquainted with the people he had to deal with—with their natural astuteness and perspicacity—he would never have made the mistake he did.

At any rate the information was gained—at a cost—that the "Sirdar" and his men were in that section of the range, and on this our Brigadier promptly acted by posting a chain of strong detachments with methods of quick inter-communications at the entrance of what might be considered the principal "passes" leading in and out of the labyrinth of rocky hills, while reinforcements of three more Regiments and another Battery of Mountain guns were brought up—the object being to bottle up the tribesmen and starve them out, if possible!

A month passed, with no more progress than the sniping of a few men on both sides, for, as it was discovered later on, the enemy had sufficient supplies stored away in caves and caverns to last them for years.

The "Sirdar", like other inhuman lunatics, had perspective and foreseeing the action that the Government would eventually take against him, made his preparations

Of the people who had fled to Hongu from persecutions, many were known to the Malik as honest men. A few of them agreed to join us as guides and informers, but we had to exercise great care in this matter, that such were in no way connected with the wild tribesmen. Such things happened many times before—Afghanistan for instance—with most unfortunate results.

In connection with this subject, an incident occurred in one of our picket-camps to which I alluded before. As a preliminary, I must explain that from the time we marched from the railway terminus at Kushalgarh, the Force was destitute of vegetable supplies of every kind, but the Gurkhas—men from the hills—soon discovered a substitute in the shape of a species of wild spinach—called by them *sag*, that was found growing in certain damp places among the rocks. One day a couple of Gurkhas ventured out a distance from the stockade in the direction of some rocks for the purpose of gathering this *sag*. On the way they met an old man coming from that direction with a large basket of the stuff on his back. On being questioned, he said it was for sale to the troops. The two Gurkhas were so pleased to be saved the trouble of the journey and gathering of the *sag*, that they bought as much as they required and returned to the stockade well pleased, bringing the old fellow with them.

While wandering about the camp with his big basket calling out “*sag*”—he was observed by one of the refugees, who quietly approaching a British Officer of the Gurkhas, passing on some business, made a sign to attract his attention and whispered the word “*jassoos*” (spy)—pointing to the *sag* seller—“I know him well, I have known him for years, he is Gulam Kabir, one of the ‘Sirdar’s’ men.”

The Officer calling to a few of his men, in his zeal, made the mistake of running towards the *sag* seller, who observing them threw down his basket and dashed away towards the hills at a pace that belied the appearance of decrepit old age that he had affected. But though he showed an uncommon turn of speed, one of the active little Gurkhas was quickly overtaking him. At last, seeing that he had no chance of escaping between the rocks, he stopped, and drawing the long Khyber knife concealed under his rags, turned to meet his pursuer, who had outstripped his comrades, and seeing the tribesman at bay, promptly engaged him in as pretty a duel as one would wish to see.

The tall Pathan wielding his long knife in the tribal, scientific manner, while the active little Gurkha's cat-like manœuvres and the cunning sweep of his deadly kukri, countered the long reach of the other's thrust, but the clumsy army boots worn by all troops was a handicap, compared with the light sandals of the tribesman, with the result that on account of an unfortunate slip, the Gurkha stumbled badly, which gave the Pathan an opening of which he promptly took advantage, by throwing himself on the Gurkha and burying the long knife in his neck. But his success did not avail him much, for by then the other Gurkhas had closed around him, and in a moment he was down and disarmed.

It was as much as the Officer could do to prevent the Pathan from being carved to pieces by the kukris of the others. Thinking that valuable information might be obtained, he was made prisoner, and hauled off to the picket-stockade followed by the others carrying the wounded Gurkha, who was not expected to live.

When the disgusting rags and grease were stripped from the prisoner he was found to be a powerful young man of

about thirty-five years of age. When confronted with the man who had recognized him as Gulam Kabir, he only laughed sarcastically and remarked, "*Stera masha, Ibrahim, sia waroar stu sera zir khabra ba kai*" ("Greetings, Ibrahim, your brother will soon speak to you") meaning, that his brother, who was also one of the "Sirdar's" men, would kill him in revenge.

Arriving at the stockade, I, being the only man who spoke Pukhtu, was sent for to act as interpreter, but after half an hour's talk with the man no satisfactory information could be obtained. He would only laugh and jeer at us, until I gave him to understand that he was to be hanged and afterwards his body burned in a pig's skin. Those fanatical Mohomadans have no fear of death by hanging alone, but the subsequent disposal of his body in connection with the pig's skin, would not only be a definite prohibition to his entering "*bahisht*"—the heaven of all his hopes and dreams—but would be his eternal damnation in *dozok* (hell).

The threat of the pig's skin seemed to sober the fellow. He stopped his jeering and in a serious tone asked me what information we wanted from him. I explained. We wished to find out all about the "Sirdar"—Where he was at the present time? His usual haunts? His intentions? The way to his principal stronghold?—and so forth.

He promised to give us all the information we asked for if we would let him go. This I told him was out of the question, as he had killed one of our men, and even by the law of his own land, a life for a life would be exacted. After a minute's thought he spoke again, saying that he understood the law, but at least we could promise against the application of the pig's skin and burning after his death. This we could do. Then he gave us quite a budget of

information in connection with his master and his ways of life, all of which was carefully written down. Afterwards, we found—as I expected at the time—that there was a pound of fiction to every grain of truth in the man's statement.

However, it was decided to hang the man, but the Officer-in-charge of our stockade being nervous about taking the responsibility, suggested sending him under escort to the Brigade Headquarters, but the Gurkha Jemadar quietly remarked that his men were very angry about the death of their comrade and were of a mind to take the law into their own hands, which would be the cause of their getting into serious trouble, for if the spy was sent off under an escort there would not be the slightest doubt but that the sepoy would *deal* with him *en route*. Of course, they would report on arrival that the man had killed himself rather than be hanged, or some such story—but it would not clear them, as anyone who knew the Gurkhas would not be misled by such a report. It would be best to hang the man out of hand in the authorised manner according to Military Law—that the proper death of a spy was that of hanging. The Officer was convinced, and gave orders for the hanging to take place at once. On receiving the order, the Gurkhas gleefully set about the matter. A long rope was provided by the lashing together of a couple of our transport *salunds*, or loading ropes. Suddenly it was found that, owing to the nature of the country which was composed of rock and low-lying scrub, not a tree could be found on which to carry out the operation. Of course, a firing party at a dozen paces could obviate the inconvenience, but such an honourable "send-off" for a spy could not be entertained for a moment. Hanging was the traditional method, and hanging it should be. Someone pointed to the jumble of rocks about a quarter of a

mile away, one of which would serve the purpose, as a sharp-pointed angle projected to an extent of about ten feet and at a height of twenty-five or thirty feet from the ground

It was quite obvious that our Officer had a penchant for a certain type of American fiction in connection with methods of lynching, for he suddenly conceived the idea of adopting a sample of it. He called for one of my transport mules, I picked one of my best, though somewhat unruly pets. Full instructions were then given to a Havildar, and ten men who, with the prisoner in their midst, hands bound behind, marched off towards the mound of rocks, followed by one of the muleteers leading "Old Smoker," our most aristocratic mule, the proud leader of his troop.

Having arrived at the place of execution, the rope was fixed round the prisoner's neck and he was lifted on to the mule, who after a sidelong glance of suspicion and disgust at the ragged specimen he was expected to carry, laid back his ears and snorted indignantly, to think that he, a respectable mule and leader of his troop, should be forced to participate in such a degrading exhibition, the atmosphere of which had a nasty smell.

With his rider, he was led under the overhanging rock on to which an active little Gurkha, taking the end of the long rope, began to climb with the intention of lashing it to the projecting point. The idea being, that when all was ready the mule would get a slap on the rump, causing him to canter away leaving the spy hanging there. But in this case there was a confirmation of the old proverb—the "slip" being the long rope that slipped from the Gurkha's hand as he struggled to fix it to the rock and to keep his precarious balance at the same time. The shock of the wriggling coils on to "Old Smoker's" hind quarters

did not appear to mollify his already ruffled temper, for with a squeal and a lashing out of flying hoofs he scattered the escort, and before he could be stopped, had cleared a way for himself and his bound rider, as he bolted at a maddening speed, accelerated by the whirling, dancing coils of the long rope jerking behind, and slapping his hind quarters

Whether it was that the Pathan, who, like all his people, was an excellent rider, managed with his knees to guide the mule in the direction he wished to go, one could not say, but the fact was that in less than a minute they had both disappeared among the rocks, before the armed Gurkhas had sufficiently recovered from their surprise and confusion caused by the charging and kicking mule, could get a steady shot at him. What a fiasco! The spy had not only escaped, but impudently borrowed my best mule to aid him. I say, "borrowed" advisedly, for on inspecting my mule lines next morning I found old "Smokey" in his own "standing" on the right of his troop. How he had disposed of his rider we did not find out for many days.

Our Brigadier appeared to have got tired of waiting for the "Sirdar" to make a move, but under the circumstances I considered the "Sirdar's" tactics were just what they should be, for he had supplies to last his whole Force for a very long period, and his position—though not altogether impregnable—was such that it would take a strong and well-equipped Force of troops inured to mountain warfare to dislodge him.

It now seemed as if the sense of the old fable, regarding the Mountain and Mohomet, would have to be accepted as an example. If the "Sirdar" would not show his face to us, we would have to show ours to him. So it was that the day following the hanging fiasco, we received orders to

break camp and join up with Nos 2 and 3 stockades, at a point ten miles to the north of our then present position, where all three Forces under command of Brigadier F— would move as No. 1 Column up the N W salient of the Gulistan range, which was understood to be the *pied-a-terre* of the enemy. Our Column was composed of a regiment of Gurkhas, another of Sikh pioneers, a third regiment of Bengal Infantry, three guns of the Hazara Mountain Battery, two Squadrons of Indian Cavalry and a detachment of British signallers, in addition to about 3,000 transport mules and camels

Our line of march led up through the dry, stony bed of a river, through a wilderness of low hills, criss-crossed into a tangled maze of ravines, where excellent facilities for attacks on our supply convoys appeared to many of us who had had previous experience of such, too obvious to be overlooked by the hawk-eyed tribesmen

We were pushed at a rapid pace, as it was *imperative* that we arrive before nightfall at a certain point agreed upon in conjunction with the Commander of No 2 Column

It was while rounding a bend of the river-bed where the cliffs drew in so as to form a narrow defile, that we had our first meeting with the tribesmen, whose intentions, undoubtedly, were to take toll of our convoy that, with our escort of Gurkhas, distributed at intervals along the line, stretched backwards for a distance of half a mile or more behind the main body of our troops that had already gone ahead to some considerable distance, without hindrance Even our "leading" troop of mules was permitted to pass, when suddenly a body of about fifty tribesmen dashed out of a deep *nullah* leading from the hills, where evidently

they had been hiding until the Column had passed, and being safe from strong opposition, they could have the convoy at their mercy

By way of introduction, they fired a scattered volley into our line of mules, and a number of them dashed among our men slashing and hacking with their long swords while others got busy driving the loaded animals into the *nullah*, from where they could be pushed through the hills and maze of ravines towards their hiding place, but their plans were not permitted to develop, for on re-entering the *nullah* they came under a steady and well-directed fire from one of our "flanking" pickets, who from their position high up among the rocks that bordered the river-bed, were well situated to inflict considerable punishment on them. Those that had re-entered the *nullah* were ruthlessly picked off by our men without a chance of retaliation. In the meantime, a number of our Gurkha escort from front and rear had hurried along the line of animals to the point of attack, with the result of there being little chance of their escape—though a few did manage to get away. They lost twenty-one in killed and wounded, while sixteen were taken prisoners. The Khyber knives and long swords of the mountain men accounted for half a dozen of our muleteers, who, being unarmed, could only defend themselves from the swordsmen by pelting them with stones and dodging in and out through their mules.

From the prisoners taken, quite a lot of useful information was collected that materially helped us to convince the "Sirdar" that he was not quite the invincible power that he wished the Frontier to believe.

After five or six days' strenuous skirmishing through the hills, and several encounters with snipers and small parties of the enemy, wherein a few dozen men were lost on

both sides, our Column went into "standing camp" on a wide plateau above the small village of Gwadar and about five hundred feet above a branch of the *Shpagh Sind* (or "Sixth River"), which at this point made a horseshoe-bend that was to our camp a natural defence on three sides

Column No 2 took strategic possession of a point towards the south, that would prevent any attempted operations by the enemy in the direction of Baliamin or Hongu

After a few days, finding our supplies of fodder running low, we thought it time to do something about it. One of our mule Duffadars, an old Afridi Pathan, Miran Gul by name, who had lived in these parts sometime prior to his joining the Army, informed us that we would be able to get plenty of grain and fodder by foraging through the deserted villages and caves, many of which were about the vicinity. The information proved most useful, for the very next day, taking twenty mules and a small escort of a dozen Gurkhas, we went out under the old Duffadar's guidance and returned in the afternoon with full loads, which included a quantity of excellent barley. Our first venture being so successful, we were encouraged to further efforts which continued satisfactorily for several days

One cold and snowy morning we set out with forty mules and an escort of Gurkhas. After sending out half a dozen "flank" scouts on each side, we proceeded up the river-bed for a few miles, then signalling to our scouts to move accordingly on our flank. We then turned up through a narrow valley that twisted away to the right, presently leading us to open ground upon a fair-sized but quite deserted village

Undoubtedly the quality of the "Sirdar's" *protection* seemed to be of a peculiar brand to have such a strange effect

on his 'people' as to drive them from their homes, leaving their supplies of grain and fodder, so laboriously harvested from their poor holdings along the river banks; and, regardless of all loss, but to get away as far as possible from the "protesting" em.

Before entering the village, I was careful to place our escort at several points around and outside, so that our muleteers would not be surprised while loading up their mules with the plentiful supplies found in the deserted houses and stables.

It was while cautiously feeling my way through one of the many narrow and mired-up lanes between the empty houses, that I was startled by the sound of a whimpering cry that might have been that of a woman. I stood still for a moment listening for its repetition or some further sound, but before I could find an explanation for its cause, a horseman, holding a bundle of some kind before him, dashed out, of what seemed to be a walled but roofless enclosure, and bore down on me with a rush and splattering of mud. The lane, in addition to being more than ankle-deep in snowy slush, was not wide enough for a jump to one side, so the only alternative was to throw myself flat in the mud: knowing well that the horse would jump over without touching me. In a second the horse and rider were round a corner and out of sight. Quickly sitting up, I drew my revolver and fired three shots in quick succession as a warning to our escort posted outside. I was scarcely on my feet, when the crack of a rifle told me that they were on the alert. Scrambling out of the labyrinth of crooked lanes as fast and as best I could, I made my way towards the point from where the report came. There I found three Gurkhas leaning on their rifles, and in their midst the figure of a tribesman lying on the ground, while a tawed-haired girl of about thirteen or fourteen years of age, with a wild look

of fear in her strange grey eyes, huddled against the low wall a few paces to one side. It happened, that on hearing my revolver shots, the Gurkhas were in a moment standing with their rifles at the ready, and as soon as the horse dashed past from among the houses, one of them raised his rifle and shot the rider in the back. He pitched headlong off the horse carrying the bundle, that happened to be the little girl, with him. The horse, without a saddle and with a piece of rope for a bridle, twisted about his head and muzzle, did not await events, but broke away, and in less than a minute had disappeared up the ravine.

A movement from the man on the ground showed that he was still alive. On being turned face upwards, he gasped the few words "*Obo, obo ra kra*" ("Water, give me water") I took a water-bottle from one of the muleteers and raising his head, got him to drink what he could, with the remainder, I washed the blood flecks from his lips and chin. He closed his eyes and seemed to rest for a few minutes, then looking up, slowly moved his hand as if to speak. Bending close, I managed to catch the whispered words—" *La phahi na, de pah shan mur shawal, kha di!*" ("Dying like this, is better than being hanged") The exertion brought a rush of blood from his lips, a convulsion of his body, and he was dead! But, from the words uttered, I at once recognized him as our friend, the spy, who, through a trick of fate, and with the help of old "Smokey", the mule, escaped being hanged in the foot-hills some days ago.

The muleteers dug a grave and buried the tribesman down by the river, after which we loaded the mules and made our way back to camp, well satisfied with our foraging.

I tried to obtain an explanation from the girl, but failed, for it seemed that the shock and fright of the tumble off the

horse, had shattered what few wits she might have had I placed her in the charge of our old Duffadar, who being one of her own people would be more likely to get her to talk on our return journey, and in this I surmised correctly.

On arrival, it chanced that the Brigade Major met us at the stockade barrier and stopped to have a word regarding our foraging expedition. Speaking of the shooting incident and death of the spy, he looked at the girl and enquired as to what I intended to do with her? My idea was that the Brigadier would naturally want a report of all such happenings

"Well, Sir"— I commenced, "The General will—"

"No, he won't," he drily remarked, "and I wouldn't advise you to take her to him," saying which, he passed on with a sarcastic grin I resolved to follow his advice

As soon as our mules were unloaded and attended to, I looked up the old Duffadar, who, in the meantime, saw that the girl had been fed and cleaned up a bit after her experience This is her story as told by herself

"We were of the people of the village of Narkote—the other side of the Koh-Sadagh—my father and I I am Phazooli. My little brother died in the snow, and I am my father's only child His business was all with horses—buying and selling. The wicked men of the 'Sirdar' came one day and forcibly took away much property and goods belonging to our people They killed Gul Raza, the Malik, and Rassool Khan, the *shroff*, and took his two daughters away. My father and I, with Phaloo, our mare, the only one of our horses left to us—I myself reared her from a *bacha*—we managed to hide in the *bruz-garh* (wolf-cave) beyond the river and made our escape during the night Two days and nights we travelled through the hills, hiding

by day in the *gells* (ravines), intending to get to Hongu. The third day we met a very bad man who said he wanted Phaloo, but my father refused him. The man suddenly drew the *peshkhauzs* from his *kummar* and killed my father with a stab. He took our horse and having mounted, pulled me up too, saying that the great and good 'Sirdar' wanted me for his wife. He carried me for two days to the place where you found us."

Her experience was in no way unusual in those parts, especially in the "Sirdar's" reign, as a "Protector"

One of the guides, a respectable old man, by name Mian Gul, who had suffered at the hands of the "Sirdar," and who now volunteered to help us in hunting down the firebrand, took charge of the girl until the return of the next empty convoy, when there would be an opportunity of sending her to Hongu.

Late that night orders were received that our Column was to be split into three Forces and would march separately early next morning in different directions, all converging on the northern Gulistan range. The Force under the command of Colonel F—, to which I with 400 mules was attached, consisted of two Gurkha regiments, one Pioneer and one Gurkha, a Squadron of Native Cavalry, two Mountain Guns, a detachment of British Signallers and Medical Details.

Our line of march was along the river-bed fortunately, on account of the watering, until we sighted the village of Sarfulla, on a distant height, with its three strongly built "watch" and defence towers.

That night we encamped by the river and in an exceedingly unfortunate position as far as strategy might be considered, for besides a rough and shallow trench perimeter and our outlying sentries, we had no defence.

About 9 p.m., while paying a visit to my mule-lines, the Duffadar quietly told me that Mian Gul, our old guide, wished to speak with me. I did not know that the old man had accompanied our Force, I thought he would have been at Headquarters.

Approaching his tent, I threw back the flap as I called his name. I was a little surprised to find myself face to face with the Waziri girl of the previous day's adventure.

"Hallo!" I exclaimed, "you here?"

"*Sihera musha, Sahib,*" she saluted, "Mian Gul told me that I could not go to Hongu until the camel convoy came."

"Where is Mian Gul?" I asked.

"He has gone to speak with Zardan Gaffoor Munshi with the *Megar Sahib*" (political)

At that moment, the old man himself quietly entered the tent, and giving the usual salute, said in a low voice, "Sahib, I am suspicious, and I am afraid. Please sit down and I will explain. Don't mind the girl, she is with us."

As soon as we were seated on a couple of old rugs, he began

"Sahib, all day as we travelled through country with which I am well acquainted, even as this little girl is, who always accompanied her father on his business, I took note of many circumstances that strangers would not see, or if they did, would not understand. I said nothing until just after dark, I took careful note through the *durbin*, of the many lights and great unusual activity that can be observed in Sarfulla. No village in all the land is accustomed to showing such light, Sahib—it is for a purpose. What is the purpose? I feel sure that it is to attract the attention

from some other affair Those devils may even consider that we will send troops up there to attack, where there are but a few people, while they will make an attack on our camp Sahib, thinking this, I went a while ago to speak with the Munshi Zardan Gaffoor, who is assistant to Intazam, that he might warn the *Megar* Sahib On coming to his tent, I could see him through the half-closed door seated on a mat, reading a small paper by the light of a lantern At the same moment a man of the Gurkhas came quickly, shouting, "Ho ! Munshi" I saw the piece of paper slip from the Munshi's hand, as he sprang to his feet and came to the tent door

"The Sahib wants you, you are to come at once," the Gurkha exclaimed As the Munshi started to accompany the sepoy, he saw me and called back—"Wait here, Mian Gul, I will return soon"

"Sahib, I have had from the beginning a suspicion of that man After looking about, I entered his tent and picked up the paper I saw him reading and a leather packet that was also on the mat I cannot read, Sahib, so I have brought them to you, as you are the only Sahib I know who is well acquainted with Pukhtu"

So saying, he handed me the leather wallet and a folded piece of paper

"Alright, Mian Gul," I replied, putting the packet into my pocket, "I will look at them by-and-by"

After a little further conversation with the old man and the girl, I returned to my tent and sat down to worry through the papers Half an hour later, I had not the slightest doubt as to the Munshi's treachery Having stuffed the papers into my pocket and picked up my revolver

belt, I was about to start for the Brigade Major's tent, when I heard a clatter of hoofs outside. It was my old Duffadar who appeared to be very excited about something. I was not surprised about his excitement, when I heard what he had to say. "Sahib," he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper as he looked about in the darkness, "Mian Gul is dead, stabbed through the heart, even at the door of his tent. The girl knows all."

"Where is she?" I asked.

"In my own tent, with two of our own men 'guarding' her."

"Come," I said, "we can talk to her later. Does she know who stabbed him?"

"Yes," he gasped, as we ran, "the Munshi."

In a very few minutes we were at the Brigade Major's tent and found him asleep. He swore—"like a soldier"—on being wakened up, but when he grasped the situation, his movements were also "soldier-like."

Men were sent to arrest the Munshi, but he was nowhere to be found. In less than twenty minutes, every man in camp that could hold a rifle and bayonet was crouched in the perimeter trench, waiting for whatever might happen, while a hundred sharp-eyed Gurkhas lay among the rocks around the camp at a distance of about four or five hundred yards, each man having beside him a bundle of dry wood, a box of matches, and a pint bottle of kerosene oil.

The night was dark and bitterly cold, with an icy sleet whipping through the silent and seemingly sleeping camp that had every appearance of being quite unsuspecting of attack from without, or trouble of any kind.

While waiting events, I took the opportunity of having a word with the girl regarding the murder of Mian Gul. Proceeding to the Duffadar's tent, on each side of which a hefty muleteer sat on guard, I found her on the floor wrapped in a mule blanket. On assuring her that she had nothing to fear, she, in a trembling voice, told me her story as follows —

" Sahib, you had left the tent but a few minutes, when someone came in and called ' Mian Gul ' O, Sahib, he was so good and kind to me, he was as my own dear grandfather who lives in Baliamin "

" It's the Munshi," he whispered, " hide yourself under the rugs "

" I rolled myself up in the old blanket and crouched down in the corner. He then answered the man outside, that he was coming, and having put out the light of our little lamp, went outside. I heard the man ask for the return of some papers which Mian Gul denied having. The man cursed, and called him a liar and a thief, then there was the sound of a groan and something heavy fell against and very nigh brought down the tent. Hearing someone moving about in the dark and cursing to himself, I became very frightened, and quietly lifting the edge of the tent, rolled outside. The man who came into the tent, relit the lamp, and while he searched about he was cursing all the time. After a while, he went away and I crept around to the front of the tent where I found that my dear friend was lying dead. I then ran to the tent of Meeran Gul, and told him all "

Hardly had the girl finished her story, when the tension of waiting was shattered by a crackle of rifle fire heard from the other side of the camp, that told us that our " out-lying " pickets were on the alert. A minute or two later, glimmers

of flame shot up from a hundred points around, and by the time some of the pickets came running back to the perimeter, the dancing flames of a hundred little wood flares had lit up the surroundings quite sufficiently to show our men, where and what to fire at

The pickets reported the presence of a crowd of tribesmen creeping up through the rocks from the direction of the river-bed, with the obvious intention of attacking the camp on two sides, as some hundreds of them had been deflected towards the higher and rockier ground on the left face of the stockade

Seemingly, not understanding our—to them—*peculiar* habit of remaining silent under such circumstances, the tribesmen evidently fearing that the firing of our outposts "might awake our *sleeping* camp," resolved to attack at once, by charging over our perimeter in the usual manner with their wild, screeching yells, that were supposed to shake the nerves of our soldiers and put fear in their hearts

On they came, a wild horde of leaping, screaming devils, the sight and sound of which would undoubtedly try the nerves of the untrained soldier, but failed to have the desired effect on our experienced men

Not a shot was fired, until the Pathans came into the light of the flares, when they were saluted with a blaze of withering death from a thousand Martini-Henry 450 bullets, the effect of which left a few hundred of them sprawling among the rocks. Thinking that our men were unprepared, this was a surprise and checked the charging crowd for a moment, but this was quite long enough for our men to reload and pour another volley into the hesitating crowds that left many more lying in the middle spaces between the fires and perimeter where they met a wall of bristling bayonets

Forty or fifty daring spirits slashed and cut their way through the Pioneers at a weakly defended spot in the trench, and in their blind rage got among our picketed mules that they cut and hacked in a senseless fury, until they were suddenly faced by a company of Gurkhas signalled from the west side of the camp. With their wicked-looking, flashing *kukries* in their trained hands, they were a match for the long swords of the fanatics. Someone had set fire to our pile of fodder which now threw up a red glow on the weird scene. The fight, or to be correct—series of fights—between the “little men,” as we used to call the Gurkhas, and the tribesmen was unique of its kind. Here might be seen a Gurkha on one side of an indignant mule that had already lost its tail by a sword cut, defending himself against a big Pathan who tried to cut him down from across the mule’s back. The Gurkha suddenly bobs down to escape a whirling sword slash, and diving under the mule’s stomach disembowels the big man with a scientific upward slash of his terrible *kukri*. In and out, among and over the screaming mules, the big and little men ran, jumped, dodged, cursed and fought each other for about twenty minutes in the flickering, dancing, red light of the blazing fodder pile, until not one of the two score of *ghazis* (fanatics) that got inside the perimeter remained alive, for, in a fight of that kind, a Gurkha has no use for a wounded enemy. The fight at the perimeter was vicious and merciless while it lasted, but the tribesmen finding that their “surprise” was no surprise at all, in fact more like a death trap, beat a hasty retreat, leaving about four hundred dead and wounded.

It was no part of the General’s scheme to do anything in the way of pursuing the enemy in the darkness, through the hills, in which they were thoroughly at home. They would have us at their mercy—and very little of that—so the

remainder of the night was spent in burying our dead, and attending to not only our own, but the enemy's wounded also. The enemy's dead had to be left where they lay till the morning.

Next day, sometime about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the Officer in command of our outlying pickets was extremely surprised to observe the approach of a small party of tribesmen carrying, in addition to a large white flag of truce, some kind of a roughly made litter, in which was seated, what appeared to be the figure of a man with his head and shoulders enveloped in a cloth. Neither the Officer of the picket, nor any of his men, understood Pukhtu, which obliged him to escort the little procession to the stockade. As they passed I spoke to the man who carried the flag, and who appeared to be the leader. In answer to my question, the fellow grinned and replied, "Sahib, this is some of your property that must have strayed from your camp. Our kind and benevolent 'Sirdar' considers it but his duty to return it to you."

By then the General, who had been informed of the affair, with the Brigade Major came on the scene. They were permitted to enter the perimeter and set down the litter. One of the tribesmen whose wounds had been attended to, showed curiosity as to what might be the issue, and pulled away the cloth from over the head of the person in the litter. One of our people, with astonishment, exclaimed—"The Mun h!"—another voice—the wounded tribesman who gave us the information—exclaimed—"Ali Beg—the 'Sirdar's' cousin!"

The man looked round with frightened eyes and pain-wracked features, and well he might—for both hands and feet had been hacked off, and to complete the operation, his tongue had been torn out.

The leader of the flag of the truce party advanced, and in a loud voice exclaimed, "It is in this way that the great 'Sirdar' recompenses a traitor" Standing near the man, I quietly asked him, "Who did the Munshi betray?" The prompt reply was, "He advised the 'Sirdar'—his own cousin—to make the attack last night, as your camp was weak and badly defended and that your Officers were totally unsuspecting of our proximity The advice was all wrong as we learnt last night It was a trap set for us by the *fauj* (army), who would pay big money to Ali Beg for his treachery"

The flag party were then permitted to withdraw, but there was no help for the "Munshi," who bled to death within an hour He reaped the reward of his treachery

Orders were now issued that our Column would move at once in the track of the enemy and do everything in our power to bring the clans to a stand That was not so easy, as they, knowing the ranges so well and being unencumbered with all the service paraphernalia that was such a drag on us, could move about us through the mountains with such ease and celerity that discounted our numbers, equipment and discipline Our only chance to bring them to a stand-still somewhere—was strategy of the "Clive v. Watson" brand

The evening of the next day our Column having crossed the "Koh-i-Sadagh," encamped above the deserted and ruined village of Narkote, but late as it was, I had to report to the Brigade Major that our animals had had no forage since the day before, our stock having been burnt during the attack on the camp It was incumbent on us to try and obtain some from the village a couple of miles away. Having obtained permission, I took thirty mules and a Gurkha escort of twenty men Coming to the village, I

posted sentries around the place as usual, to prevent a surprise by the enemy, parties of which were forever on the prowl through the hills, while the muleteers, knowing from experience the most likely places to search, scattered through the village, and in less than an hour had as much as their animals could carry

While the mules were being loaded up, I, out of curiosity, wandered about the ruins admiring the handiwork of the "Protector's" men. The whole place reeked of pillage and wanton destruction, saying much for the insensate nature of the violence, that strongly indicated its object as being vengeance, more than the desire to loot, that is, and always will be, the "first principles" with the Border bandit

Passing by a closed door of what appeared to be one of the usual stables or *cow-baras*, I was rather startled by the unmistakable groans of a man inside. Thinking that it was one of my own men, who might have met with an accident of some kind, I called out as usual, "*Kee hoiya?*" (What is the matter?) Not getting a reply, nor hearing any further sound from the *bara*, I pushed the door and found, though not bolted, there was some hinderance to its opening, such as a heavy bundle of some kind. I tried putting my shoulder against it but failed, though the shove I gave it produced the effect of another groan that conveyed the idea of the obstruction being the body of a man lying against it. I left the door and went round the *bara* looking for some other opening. Immediately behind was a heap of stable litter over which I climbed towards a small opening of about eighteen inches square, probably used for the purpose of passing in fodder. I was about to go through it, when I heard a soft whinny and a moment later was looking into the dark eyes of a beautiful grey Waziri mare, that, with a pathetic fluttering of nostrils, stretched her

lovely neck up towards the opening and did not withdraw it when I stroked her muzzle, while her soft "whikkering" seemed to plead for something. Noticing the drawn-back nostrils, I knew that the poor thing was crying for water. I resolved to get her out at once. While speaking gently to her, I was scrambling through the opening. On looking round the empty *bara* I found, as I suspected, that the obstruction behind the door was the body of a man—one of the tribesmen! An occasional groan from him told me that he still had some life in him, though from his condition it must have been very little. As I was more concerned about the mare than about him, I dragged him to one side of the door which I opened, then, turning to the mare which seemed to follow my actions with a strange intensity, I laid hold of the piece of frayed rope that hung about her neck, and "making much" of her tried to lead her through the door by the side of which the man lay, where I had placed him. Suddenly she jerked the rope from my hands and with an angry squeal, whirled about and with both heels planted a murderous kick in the man's ribs, the force of which must have shattered whatever bones were left in his body from previous attentions, in addition to which, had I not restrained her, she undoubtedly would have stamped out of him any life that might remain.

After a little trouble, I managed to get her out of the *bara* and called to some of the muleteers to see to the man inside. A few minutes later, they reported that the man was dead.

I must confess that, in my interest and concern for the mare, I quite forgot about the man or how it came to pass that he got into such a state. From all appearances, and taking into consideration the *Waziri's* revengeful assault—for that it undoubtedly was—provided the only feasible explanation of what happened. The man couldn't have

been her owner or master, for if that were so he could not possibly have ill-treated her—and *ill-treatment* was just what I suspected. The pure Waziri horse is a thoroughbred and is recognised as the most noble, gentle and intelligent of its kind throughout the East. When treated with kindness, which anyone who understands a horse cannot fail to do, he will return two-fold the affection bestowed on him, but like the men of the Waziri tribe, he knows how to deal with anyone who presumes to ill-treat him.

Having got her out of the *bara* after considerable coaxing, I noticed she was staggering with weakness. She probably had neither food nor water for some days. One of the muleteers brought a *tabra* (leather bucket) of water, which she drank in a moment—and whined for more. Leading her down to the shallow water of the river, I permitted her to lie down, while we bathed her, after which she relished a feed of barley. She appeared to be a splendid example of her breed and I resolved on returning to camp, to keep her for myself, if our Brigadier did not consider it “loot”, which was against orders.

That night, after seeing her well fed and groomed, I had the mare picketed close to my tent.

Being tired after our long march during the day and our “foraging” expedition in the evening, I was soon asleep, but was awakened an hour later by the low whinnying of the mare intermingled with the sound of whispering and soft laughter from someone behind my tent. In half a minute I was outside, gripping my revolver, but what I saw when I stole a look around the tent surprised me exceedingly.

The Waziri girl, with her arms around the mare’s neck, whispering—“Phaloo! Oh, my Phaloo!” while gurgling with a mixture of laughter and tears and giving expression to all the endearing terms that the Pukhtu language is

capable of, while the mare rubbed her nose against the girl's shoulder with a peculiar little throaty gurgle and flicker of the nostril that seemed to respond and return the affectionate greeting I stared at this tableau for a moment

"Well, girl," I said in a quiet voice for fear of disturbing others, "what are you doing here?"

Quickly turning about, she exclaimed, as tears of rapture ran down her cheeks—"Oh, Sahib! It is my own Phaloo!—she has come back to me Allah has sent her!"

This gave me something to think about "Tell me again the name of your village?"

"Narkote," she replied.

Of course, then I understood The mare after the shooting incident bolted, and naturally made for her own home, that had in the meantime been deserted by its inhabitants The dead tribesman having got sight of her, followed, and had probably tried to take her away from her own stable, with the result that she in her then nervous and excitable state became intractable The man became angry at her resistance and evidently made use of his heavy stick to punish or persuade her. A dangerous thing to do The *Waziri* must have turned on him with hoof and tooth and literally made pulp of him. Such was the theory, and now, it looked as if I would not have the pleasure of being her owner after all, for, undoubtedly, she belonged to the *Waziri* girl Still I might manage to buy her, but when I had given the girl all details in connection with finding her mare, the prospect of buying her did not look at all promising

Next day, as our Column had made a halt, we received instructions to go out on another foraging expedition I had my saddle and bridle put on the mare and found her

even better than I expected, and that was—the best! At a distance of a few miles from camp we turned into ravines that branched off to either side of the river-bed and tried our luck among a number of caves that lined the sides of the ravines, and were most fortunate in our venture, for it was to those caves that the people mostly trusted for the preservation and safe-keeping of their harvesting

I found many things of interest hidden away in those underground galleries, many of which were joined by passages that led from one to another, till lost in a tangled maze that proved most difficult to negotiate

While exploring the place, I left the mare in charge of one of our escort, a man of the Pioneers, who sat with her in the mouth of one of the caves while she contentedly munched a bundle of green grass cut from the river side. When all the mules were loaded and ready, I told the Havildar-in-charge to call in the men of his escort, that had been placed as sentries at several points during our foraging operations, and to "form-up" with the transport mules for the return journey to camp

When all was ready, the Havildar reported that one of his men, by name Kaur Singh, was absent. It was the man in the cave mouth in whose care the Waziri mare was left. Three or four of us dashed away towards the place where the man had been posted. We found him lying dead near the rock on which he had been seated, with his loaded rifle across his knees. He had been stabbed through the back. His rifle and cartridges were gone, and so was the mare!—the only trace of her being her hoof marks that led—not out of the cave—but into it, and through what we discovered to be a long, dark passage or natural tunnel leading into another and bigger cave, and from that, winding in several directions, but ever upward, until eventually it

came out among some big rocks on the hill-side. It was by this way that the murderer, who had probably been hiding in the dark cave, made his escape with the mare. For over two hours we searched and hunted for some trace of either, but all to no purpose.

On arrival in camp with the sepoy's body, a report of the circumstance was made to the Officer commanding the Pioneers, who just then must have been in a bad temper, for his remarks sounded very much like—"Serve the fool right. A man on guard with a loaded rifle in his hand to allow himself to be stabbed. A d——n fine sentry." Later in the evening, my old Duffadar told me that the Wazir girl was broken-hearted over the loss of her mare. I sympathised, of course, but I had no time to indulge in regrets, for the Column was to move next morning before daybreak. Information had been received that the other two Columns were moving steadily on the heights above Gulistan, where it appeared the "Sirdar", being practically surrounded, had been forced to retreat, and having entrenched himself behind strongly built stone *sangars* on the heights, resolved to try conclusions with our Force.

Our march next day was a trial of endurance for men and animals. It was not the distance that troubled us, but the nature of the road. It was a rambling struggle through hundreds of narrow ravines on account of the necessity of keeping cover from the sharp eyes of the tribesmen. The difficulty of keeping all our details in touch with the main body was great, as on account of the tortuous twistings and turnings of the ravines, parties of troops and transport could not help wandering into divergencies.

After a while, these would be compelled to retrace their steps and get in touch with their detail parties the best way they could.

It was a tired and hungry Force that straggled into a semblance of camp late that evening. No tents were pitched, no fires lit, and our only food was what we carried in our haversacks, for we expected to be on our way again as soon as the first glow of daybreak would help us through the ravines.

That day, after false alarms of attack and a good many retreats finding our way back to the direction we were constantly losing as we struggled through the wilderness of hills, valleys and river-beds, we managed to pick up "helio" communication with No 2 Column who were already in the strategic position assigned to them by the General and only awaiting our arrival to make a simultaneous attack on the fortified heights held by the "Sirdar".

While superintending the feeding of my mules that evening, the Duffadar informed me that the Waziri girl refused to wait any longer for the camel convoy and had left camp that morning before daybreak. The old Duffadar had given her an old blanket and a supply of food that would last her for a few days.

I certainly did not like the idea of her running the risk of falling into the clutches of some of the prowling tribesmen, but all the same I was glad to know that she was out of camp, for having brought her in, I was, in a certain sense, responsible for her. I advised the Duffadar not to say any more about her, beyond that she had gone to Baliamin to some relations.

We got through that night in the same manner as the previous, but in better humour, notwithstanding the bitter, cold, icy winds screaming through the mountains, for all knew that we were at last come to grips with the "Sirdar" and his tribesmen.

By 11 o'clock the next morning our Column was in its appointed place. We had no knowledge of the position of our other Force, but it was understood that our General, who had had considerable experience in these Frontier expeditions, had made his dispositions carefully.

Our Column crept through the low *nullahs* from the east and took up positions immediately under the brow of a rocky range and about 800 yards from the "Sirdar's" *sangars*. Our Mountain Guns came into action at once. Though the range was just right, little impression could be made on the well-arranged *sangars*, as we, being lower, our shells either were quite innocuous against walls six feet thick, or flew over the hill-top and exploded harmlessly lower down the other side. Our Forces were then moved behind the lower range to a position south and nearer to the enemy's. It was at once understood that an attempt would be made to take the hill by storm. But to anyone who had experience in such matters, the difficulty of the job was apparent, and even if the attempt was successful, there was no doubt as to the cost of victory.

Three full regiments in skirmishing order began the ascent on the south, while our guns on the south-east still kept the tribesmen behind their *sangars* until our men were half way up the hill. One regiment remained as a "support" when the attacking force dashed over an intermediate rise and came under a withering fire from the *sangars*. Matters now became serious! Twice they were compelled to retreat to the shelter of the rise, where they were reinforced by their supports. Then with a cheer, the four regiments, each carefully selecting its own point of advance, dashed over the rise once more and advanced by rushes of half companies, while the second half covered their advance by a heavy and well-directed fire against the *sangars* above. They got to within four hundred yards of the *sangars*, where

the ascent was most difficult and the fire from the two inward curving horns of the stone breastwork was so heavy and well directed that more than two hundred of our men were already lying dead and wounded on the hill-side. The ascent being so steep and the haste of the assault so great, that the men, completely out of breath, were by then not able to move faster than a scrambling walk. Our Mountain Battery had ceased fire as our Infantry neared the *sangars*—the gunners, watching with anxiety the progress of the assault, were surprised to observe some hundreds of the tribesmen, in answer to signals from higher up, suddenly retreat from their position behind the defences and rush towards the brow of the hill, where evidently they were surprised to discover that our 2nd Column had succeeded in scaling the northern face of the range while they were actively engaged in defending their *sangars* on the south. The tribesmen, face to face with two regiments of Gurkhas that had crept up through rock and scrub, and their furious attack from such an unsuspected quarter threw them into a confusion that threatened to be their undoing. Following the Gurkhas were two Indian regiments. This diversion, and the obvious confusion of the enemy, put fresh heart into our men, who made a last great effort and closed with the tribesmen on their own *sangars*. But those devils, though meeting an occasional check, are not easily overcome, as was now proved by their stubborn defence of the *sangars*, where they made a doggedly determined stand, and as our men closed in on them from two sides, fought them hand to hand. Sword, dagger and pistol—against rifle, bayonet and *kukri*!

At about 3 in the afternoon, the “Sirdar” clearly seeing that the fight was going against him, appeared to have given his signal of “*sauve qui peut*,” for the tribesmen reluctantly retreated and began to scatter through the rocks and ravines in every direction.

One party of about fifty, seeing our Mountain Battery, seemingly unsupported, took cover at a distance of two hundred yards and opened a galling fire on our gunners, a few of whom, being slow to see the danger, were shot down, but the remainder quickly got under cover and promptly replied with their carbines, resulting in a nice little duel for the space of quarter of an hour. An instance of the tribesmen's sharp shooting was when Major G——, commanding the Battery, having occasion to direct the fire of a couple of his gunners, stretched out his hand in the direction intended, but quickly withdrew it to stare for a second at his palm, through which a tribesman's bullet had drilled a hole.

"Well, now!" he remarked in a reminiscent tone, "that proves my dear old Mother was right. She always told me it was very rude to point!"

Having assisted him in knotting a handkerchief about his hand, he continued his instructions to his men, who after losing half a dozen, were beginning to feel the position as becoming serious, when a couple of sections of skirmishing Gurkhas suddenly appeared over the ridge to the left of the tribesmen, who after leaving half a dozen of their number dead among the rocks, disappeared after the rest.

As the men of our Columns were by now dead beat from hunger, thirst and fatigue, the old traditional tactics of pursuing the beaten and fleeing enemy would have been useless in such a country. So the whole Force, after posting pickets, just settled down where they were and made what provision they could for the food and rest they were so badly in need of.

Undoubtedly, we had beaten the "Sirdar" and his tribesmen, but the cost was heavy enough on our side, but more than double on that of the enemy's.

Our Force now went into "standing camp," which constituted Headquarters on the Gulistan heights, but sent out several strong detachments to scour the ranges for the purpose of locating or hunting down any parties of the enemy that might still be holding together with the object of attacks on our convoys and the usual sniping

It was on one of our convoys from Baliamin to Saifulla-Dara that Sergeant Phelim O'Flynn had an experience of the "sniper", that considerably annoyed him. The day was hot and our march was long, over ugly country boasting of no road, but plenty of boulders and sand, conditions productive of an unquenchable thirst. Riding up to my position at the head of the convoy, he asked me if I could let him have some water from my bottle. Taking it from my hand, he emptied it into his own bottle, that contained a dram of "proof" rum. He passed it to me, saying, "Have a ddrop. It will buck y' up" I had a "ddrop" and found it good, then passed the bottle back to him. Holding it at arm's length, he began to tell me of some sniping that had occurred at the rear of the convoy, and how he and the escort had bravely replied. He put the bottle to his lips, withdrawing it again, as if toying with and prolonging the pleasurable feeling he anticipated of a glorious drink. But—before a drop of liquor had wet his lips, a sniper's bullet screamed past, after perforating the bottle and striking it from his hand, but notwithstanding the celerity of his dive after it, every drop of the longed-for elixir was lost. In his anger and vexation, he kicked the shattered bottle and indulged in ten minutes of the picturesque eloquence a Connaught Ranger is very capable of producing ! !

Of the wounded prisoners we gathered in after the battle, several offered their services in the hunting down of their "Master," who had made them great promises.

Whether it was done out of gratitude for doctoring their wounds, or hope for pardon for their connection with and participating in their "Sirdar's" villainous depredations—whatever it was—not only did our General accept their assistance, but promised to pardon and even offered a big reward to those who succeeded in his capture

For days we received information that he was in dire straits, for in addition to his own tribesmen—now his enemies—hundreds of peasants and cultivators who, with their families, had lost their homes and suffered at his hands, rose against him, so that throughout the ranges he found no one to trust—not a friend—no safety—no resting place. Truly his sins were finding him out!

And so the hunt went merrily on for a month or so, during which time our scattered "flying" detachments were kept active in their chase of the scattered tribesmen

It happened that we were again in the vicinity of Narkote village, where we had previously found fodder and grain plentiful.

One evening, on a return journey after a successful "foraging" expedition a few miles further up the river-bed, we decided, as it was getting late, to take a short cut over some lower hills, instead of the longer and rougher road by the river-bed. One of our escort, whose duty it was to keep a couple of hundred yards in advance, returned to report that he had seen a lone horseman quietly emerge from an adjoining ravine and ride up through a narrow defile that would run parallel to the route on our left. Calling to the old Duffadar and the Havildar we crept to the top of the rise that looked down into the defile mentioned and were just in time to witness the final act in one of the strangest and most romantic dramas it was ever my lot to behold!

The man rode a big grey horse, moving slowly and stealthily, as if not wishing to be seen or heard. Twice he drew rein and looked about him in every direction, then pressing his knees to the saddle quietly moved on again. His appearance and movements having made me very suspicious, I made up my mind to stop him. He had now arrived at a point about two hundred yards below where we lay watching. I was about to give the Havildar the order to shoot, but only in such a manner as to disable him, and to be careful not to hurt the horse in any way. But, just then things began to happen that prevented the necessity of shooting!

After one of his halts to scan the surroundings, the horseman was moving on again, this time towards an overhanging, rocky cliff that suggested caves, when from the opposite side of the ravine, we were startled by the sound of a woman's voice—clear and sweet as a bell, pitched in a tremolo cadenza of three musical notes repeated twice, and twice again after a few seconds' pause, that seemed to have a strange effect on the man's horse. It came to a sudden halt with head flung up and turned in the direction of the voice. For a moment it stood so, then sprang from its course and bounded towards the direction from which the voice came. The rider hauling on the reins, tried to pull him back, and failing to do so, struck it a heavy blow on the head. The horse dropped to its knees, very near unseating the man, but in a second he was up again. Another call from the ravine side, to which the horse seemed to reply in a way of its own, for it suddenly reared high on its hind legs and deliberately threw itself backwards to the ground, pinning the rider by the legs, under him. Man and horse lay still, while through the rocks, from the side of the ravine, the figure of a small Waziri boy came springing down with the nimble speed of a mountain goat. For a moment, he





stood contemplating the fallen group, then suddenly darted towards the man and pulled the long *peshkhauz*, or Khyber knife, from his *kummar-bund* (waist-cloth), and raising the flashing blade above his head, caring nothing for the cruel gleam in the man's maddened eyes, buried it in his throat, and with a second blow drove the knife into the man's heart, where the lad, leaving it, sprang backwards, and as if the "trio" arranged drama had been satisfactorily played out, the horse scrambled to its feet and stood by the boy's side, rubbing his velvet muzzle against his cheek

" And thus in a manner undignified,  
The Princely Pest of the Ranges died "

(With Apology to R. K.)

The surprise caused by the suddenness and rapidity of the whole affair, left the three of us speechless and inactive. The Duffadar, the Havildar and myself, now seeing that the lad, with the possible intention of riding away, was about to mount the horse, the old Duffadar suddenly called out in Pukhtu, " *Ohe! Fazooli Zimung ta na pezhni? Sta yar, Meeran Gul* " (Hallo! Fazooli Do you not know us? I am your friend, Meeran Gul )

The girl, for now we recognized her in her boy's clothing and ragged puggri, looked up to where we stood, then threw up her head, and said in reply— " *Kushal yam, Meeran. Zimma Phaloo bia raghilal* " (I am happy, Meeran Gul. My Phaloo has come to me again )

We were very soon with her and the mare, while at a short distance lay the body of the man she had killed

" Yes, Sahib," she quietly said, " now my father's and brother's deaths are avenged, also the destruction of many others It is the Zulami Sirdar Maqhma Din himself, who

stole my Phaloo and was trying to escape on her, but she knew my call, to which she never failed to come”

With the body of the dead “Sirdar” carried across the back of an empty mule, we returned to camp, where Phazooli and her splendid mare were the heroines of the expedition

Later, the girl explained that when she stole out of camp that night, with the old *poshteen* and the food that the Duffadar supplied her with, she resolved not to go to Baliamin but back to her own village, but could give no reason for her change of mind. She crept like a jackal through the ranges by night, hiding in caves by day, until she got to her own home, where certain of their household goods including the boy’s clothing, etc., were hidden, and lived in a small cave not far from the scene of the tragedy.

The Campaign was practically at an end, the after arrangements being left to the Civil Authorities

On our return to Hongu, with the aid of Neeran Gul, the Duffadar, the girl found some relatives with whom she and her beautiful mare lived for a time. Many offered to buy the mare from her, but she would rather die than sell her—in any case, she was in no need of money, for she obtained the reward of Rs 5,000—a fortune to her—that was offered by the Government for the capture, dead or alive of Maqhma Din—the Frontier Firebrand

Four years later, while in Kohat with 500 transport mules, I was strolling through the bazaar on market day, when a tall young fellow, accompanied by a veiled woman, saluted me in the usual manner, and with an amiable grin said, “Sahib, you are my father’s friend”

“Very good,” I replied, “and who is your father?”

His answer—"Duffadar Meeran Gul"—surprised me, and turning to the veiled figure at his side, said, "This is my wife—you know her" She quietly drew aside her veil and showed me the laughing face of Phazooli, the little Waziri girl, now become a well-developed and remarkably beautiful young woman With the Government reward they had taken up her father's business of horse-dealing, and were doing well

I, bidding them farewell, exacted a promise from the owner of Phaloo, the mare, that a foal of hers would be mine later on And it came to pass

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## THE MYSTERY OF TIRICH MIR

WHILE with the little "Force of Occupation" in Chitral after the famous "Relief" forty-three years ago, it happened that owing to one of the usual wars that broke out among the tribes through whose countries the road ran by which our supply convoys came from India, there was a near prospect of our Force of about fifteen hundred men running short of food. That was very serious and a difficulty of the first magnitude.

The Officer Commanding, who was in camp at Kila Drosh, suggested that as I knew the country and the language, I might be able to make some arrangements with the people of the upper valleys and persuade them to bring in whatever supplies were obtainable, for which they would be well paid.

As I had already a fairly good knowledge of the general products of the country, I not only felt sure of being, to a certain extent, successful, but found that the job just fitted in with the restless desire that was ever in my heart since I had entered the Chitral valley.

Tirich Mir, one of the outlying sentinels of the mighty Pamirs, a snow-clad, cone-shaped mountain 23,000 feet above sea level, was situated a hundred miles or so north of Chitral. It held the reputation through all the north lands of being haunted by certain strange beings about which the people of the valleys told fearful stories.

Its vicinity was shunned to a degree that filled the inhabitants with a shuddering horror.



of Chitral, Lutkho, Kila Drassín or Mastuck to approach nearer than ten miles from its base. Even the mention of Tirich Mir caused men to cover their ears in fear.

Eventually we arrived in the village of Kamda that was situated in the valley about twenty miles from the foot-hills of the mountain. Speaking with my two Levies of my intention to explore the place, I noticed that they didn't show any great enthusiasm towards the venture, nor did they say much on the subject, beyond a remark that they couldn't see any benefit to be gained by it.

That night in the Malik's house as we sat about the big fire in the centre of the *akhwan* or public room, the Malik himself—Khurda Beg—strongly advised me to give up my intention of trespassing on forbidden ground, that such an undertaking was to invite great misfortune. When I asked him by whom the ground was forbidden, he remained silent for some minutes as if in serious thought, then turning to me said—

“Sahib, you seem to be doubtful, but I am in a position to prove to you that Tirich Mir is inhabited by *djinns* of a most malignant kind, condemned by God to wander forever over the mountain and through its icy caves in punishment for some great sin against Him, and whenever the moon is at its full the awful cries and lamentations are heard afar off in the stillness of the night by belated travellers.”

On enquiring as to what the great sin was, he raised both hands to his ears and bowed his head, and in a frightened whisper he replied, “*la mumkin! la mumkin!*” (impossible, impossible)

After a minute's thought he turned and signed to a small boy about twelve years old who was sitting with the others

by the fire the lad got up and left the *akhwan*, but in a short time returned accompanied by a tall young woman of about thirty, whose appearance greatly surprised me. What caught my attention most was her long hair that fell about her in a veritable cascade of red-gold which, with her fine features, fair skin and dark blue eyes coupled with her style of dress created the impression of one of de Vinca's types of Ancient Greece come to life. She was a living proof of the route followed by the legions of Alexander the Great in his historic conquest of Asia. Altogether a splendid woman.

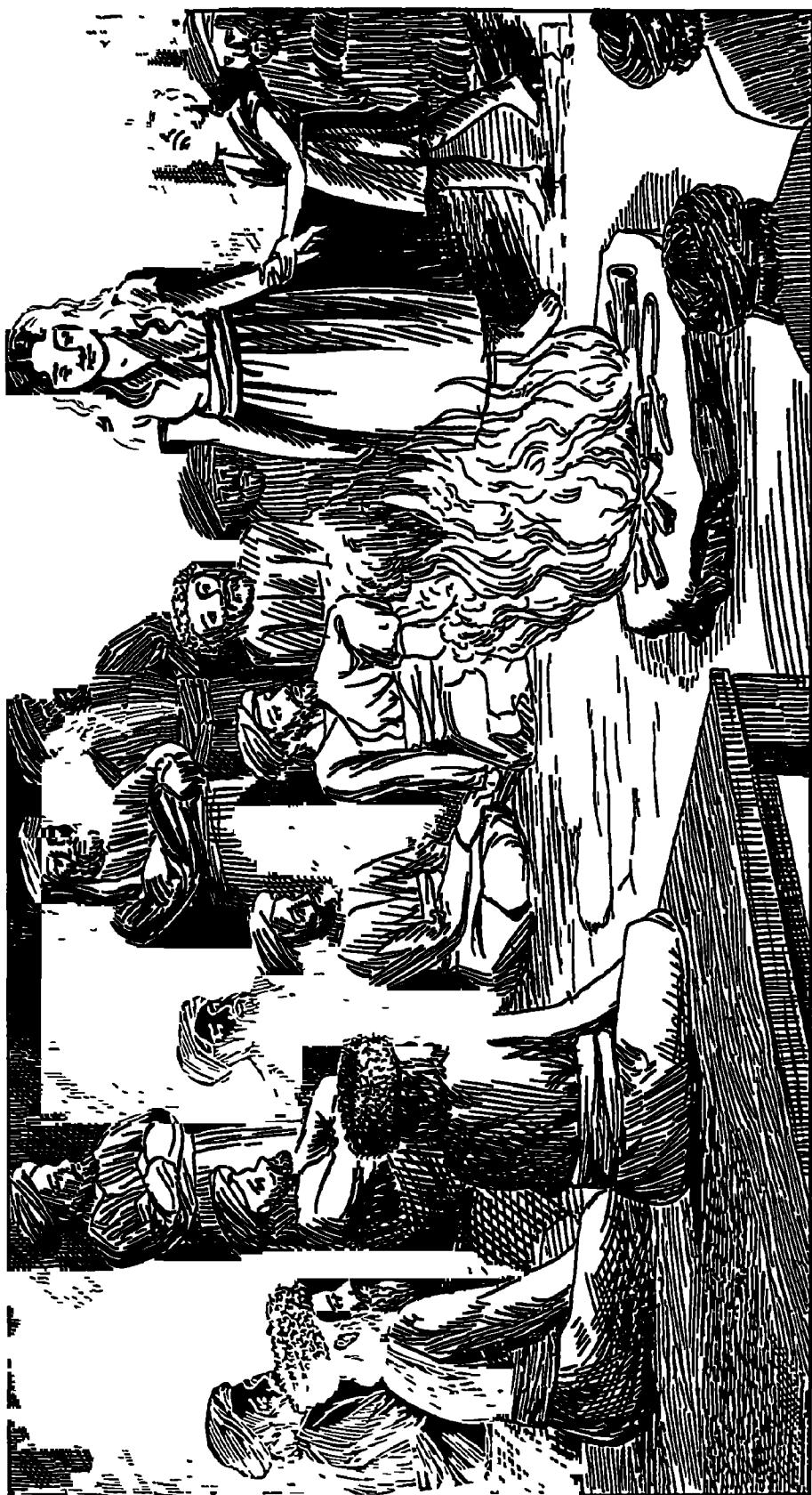
Without speaking and in an indifferent and self-possessed manner she quietly walked through the people and approached the fire, towards which she held out her hands to warm them, not taking the slightest notice of anyone in the big room, which was now quickly hushed into silence.

After a few minutes the Malik again made a quiet sign and the boy gently took the woman's hand and softly whispered to her.

Without looking at the boy she, with her free hand pushed aside the long, rippling coils of her glorious hair and still gazing into the fire, began to sing in a low, sweet voice of inexpressible beauty.

In the big room were, assembled about the fire, some fifty people young and old sitting and standing in all kinds of attitudes, and amongst them not a word was spoken, not a whisper, not a movement made all were as still and silent as death. The feeling expressed in the soft musical voice sent a spell over all so that the words of her song—a lament of sadness—were clear for all to hear and understand.

THE LAMENT OF RADURA WHO LOST HER SOUL





After an interval of a few minutes the song softly died away. The woman's head had slowly sunk on her breast and as if in thought she remained so for a while, then turning and with the boy's hand still in hers, walked from the room slowly, stately as she entered, without noticing anyone.

Well! I always considered myself as being of a disposition most material, and totally impervious to sentimental feeling of any kind, rendered so by the rough and practical life of a soldier, but I must confess that the scene I had just witnessed caused a strange tightness in my throat, that I in no way could explain, in fact—beyond the strikingly theatrical effect—I had no idea of what it was all about until the old Malik sitting by my side began to explain.

"Aftaba," he said, "listen to the story of that poor woman whose name is Radura. Ten years ago she lived happily with her young husband, Ibrid Shah, who was a trader in horses. He left the village one day with three good horses to sell in Andhadar, a town some distance the other side of the 'mountain of evil.' A week later some *felt* traders, returning to their homes, brought back the three horses they found straying many miles away, but there was no trace of Ibrid Shah.

"After several days had passed and still no news, his young wife, the woman you have just seen, packed some supplies on a pony and, riding another, rode away towards the mountain to seek her man. We tried to dissuade her from going, but she loved him dearly and would not listen.

"We never expected to see her again, but as you see—she returned. Yes—indeed—she returned *in body*, but without

her mind. She was caught by the *djinns*, deprived of her mind and driven away in the snow, through which she struggled to the village one dark night, weak and ill from hunger and exposure and almost naked. For many days she was as one that was dead, but slowly she grew well and strong in body, but her mind and her soul are gone forever. The evil spirits of Tirich Mir caught her, deprived her of her soul and sent her back to us as an empty shell. There is no explanation. She never speaks to anyone, at times she sings to herself the same sad song, but only when that boy, who is the orphaned child of her lost husband's sister, holds her hand and speaks to her. We take care of her for the sake of her great misfortune until it pleases God to call her away. There is no doubt but that the *djinns* of the mountain took her young husband also. Be warned—Aftaba—and go not to Tirich Mir." So spoke the old Malik.

Certainly it was sad to witness the unfortunate state of that splendid woman and to know of her great loss, but I'm afraid that what I heard about the *djinns*, fairies and evil spirits of the mountain only served to further whet my appetite for the adventure and to strengthen my determination to explore their haunts and, if possible, to have a little interview with some of them.

At the third night from then the moon would be at its full. I made up my mind to start for the climb next day, which would allow two days to get there. In the presence of the awe-struck people of the village I packed supplies enough for a week and with two ponies rode away with a cheerful promise to the Malik to be back "within the week," but the old man only shook his head sorrowfully as he murmured the word "*arifana*" (farewell).

The way was rough and difficult and the going necessarily slow, but by nightfall I had reached the foot-hills, about five miles in a direct line from the almost vertical slope of the mountain

Looking about for a suitable place to bivouac for the night, I found it up a narrow cleft between two great rocks, or as it might be one gigantic rock that seemed to have been split from top to bottom by some convulsion of nature in some far back age. I had watered the ponies *en route* and now gave them a feed of barley from our store. After having something to eat, I rolled myself in my rug, and with my revolver and carbine ready to hand, settled down for the night

Having gone to sleep with my mind and senses set for anything that might happen, I was quick to hear something strange. Listening intently, I caught what I took to be a long wailing sound from a direction that appeared to be high up on the mountain side. It died away in a minute or two. Thinking it was only the cry of a jackal, I was on the point of dozing off again, when something else started

It began softly but quickly rose to a harsh wild scream that made the skin of my skull begin to creep and tighten. The horrid sound held for half a minute and then faded away into silence. I was very wide awake by now and with a tight grip of my carbine got up to have a look at the ponies. I was glad to find them quite comfortable and at ease

What or where on earth could that ugly screaming be? I felt sure that it was not caused by a wild animal of any kind, for I was well acquainted with *such* noises. Never had

I heard the like before Hardly had I returned to my rug when, as before, that weird sound came again from the direction of the mountain, soft at first but gradually rising to a gurgling roar that in my imagination might be likened to the dying cry of some mighty animal of prehistoric age As before, it ended in a choking gasp that seemed to create a picture in my mind of some blood-curdling scene of horror that had just been enacted, and so those nerve-wracking sounds continued at intervals of from twenty to thirty minutes throughout the night

After an hour or so, as I couldn't find any satisfactory explanation, I got tired of straining my imagination and fell asleep my last thought was that there certainly seemed to be some cause for the people's fear

When daylight came, having provided well for the ponies and leaving them where they were, as it would not be possible to take them up the mountain, I prepared my pack and, well armed, set off for the big climb which from below and in the morning light presented features that did not offer much hope of success, but I met nothing of interest until when at about eight thousand feet I found that the mountain was honeycombed with enormous caves

While resting at the entrance of one of those caves I felt a peculiar odour that I seemed to recognize and was surprised to find that while it was bitterly cold out on the mountain side, not only was it quite warm where I was sitting, but every now and again I distinctly felt a blast of warm air come from inside the cave This made me curious Having finished eating, I picked up my carbine and entered further

As I proceeded I found that the atmosphere grew warmer Having penetrated to a distance of about forty yards, I came to an opening to my right that I found was an inner cave Its dimensions were altogether outside my computation as it was so large that in the dusk I could not see its boundaries, neither in width, length or height, but imagine my surprise when I found myself at the margin of a small lake fully thirty yards in diameter from which steam was rising I recognized it at once as a sulphur spring or lake which accounted for the peculiar odour and the hot air issuing from the cave mouth Stepping to the margin of the water to test the degree of heat, I found my feet breaking through some kind of brittle crust that on inspection proved to be masses of pure sulphur that had become corrugated there on the occasions of the lake bubbling over, as those grotto springs do

Having no time to waste, I started off on my climbing again, but while I toiled upward I tried to calculate the value of the wealth lying lost in those mountains The higher I got the more caves I found, four of which contained excellent sulphur springs, others were ice grottos of beautiful stalactitic formation

When dusk was falling, I felt too tired for further climbing, for by then I had reached to a height of about twelve thousand feet

With the intention of settling down for the night, I entered a big cave and had just thrown down my pack when my eyes were suddenly drawn towards the dark interior by the sound of a low coughing snarl that brought me to attention with my skin creeping, but what I saw next moment made me feel as if I had no skin at all—two balls of green

fire at a distance of about fifteen paces, glaring at me from the dark. Hesitation would be disastrous, but still it was more by instinct and long habit that the carbine came to my shoulder, a quick aim between the two fire-balls and with the deafening crash I didn't wait to see the result, but dashed out of the cave and quickly got behind a convenient rock with a sincere hope that nothing would follow me out. Nothing did. I waited for about ten minutes, then with the carbine at the ready crept slowly to the opening and carefully peered in.

I could see nothing. That was encouraging. Stepping softly and with hair bristling, I approached the place where the fire-balls appeared. What I found prompted me to whoop for joy—an enormous snow leopard, and stone dead! While I stood there mentally complimenting myself, I suddenly remembered that these animals, more fierce and far more to be feared than lions or tigers, were invariably to be found in pairs. Under the circumstances I thought it advisable to change my lodgings to somewhere else in case of this fellow's mate returning suddenly.

Picking up my pack I lost no time in getting outside, and in a very few minutes was a considerable distance higher up the hill-side and very soon found another cave which, after carefully exploring, I settled on as safe for the night, but what decided me was the finding of a convenient ledge some four feet wide and fifteen feet above the floor level, from which it could be reached by rough projections and footholds in the surface. I resolved to entrench myself there for the night.

After eating something and being dead tired, I wrapped myself in my old felt rug and was asleep in a very short time,

but it was a kind of "hair trigger" sleep that the slightest movement would dispel

I had not been asleep more than half an hour when I was startled by the noise of fighting—the most horrid screaming, snarling and snapping of animals

Climbing down from my ledge and cautiously looking out in the direction of the noise, I was witness to a battle royal between half a dozen huge animals of the same breed as the one I had shot

The moon was at its full, and with the glare on the white snow the scene was as clear as if it were high noon

In all probability the dead leopard's mate having returned, met others attracted by the scent of blood, so that in a very few minutes the result was tragic

For sometime I was in doubt as to how to act To commence shooting them in the hope of scaring them off, and thinking that to shoot might have the effect of drawing their attention to myself, with unpleasant results

For close on half an hour I watched the Homeric battle with my carbine ready for the first animal that might think of paying me a visit One of the leopards feeling that he had had enough of the fight, slunk out of it to a short distance and jumped on to a snow-bank where he sat snarling and licking his wounds I decided to leave them alone and let them fight it out while I climbed back to my ledge

Ten minutes later that animal limped to the mouth of my cave and began sniffing about I could with ease have

shot him, but undoubtedly it would bring the others and I could see no fun in that

It was then that the same nerve-wracking cries that I had heard the night before came again, only a hundred times more harsh and grating. I expected to see the animal at the cave mouth show some sign of fright or disturbance on hearing the cry, but was surprised to note that he did not take the slightest notice of it. This gave me something else to think about.

It was commonly understood that animals, especially the wild, cannot help showing fright or some sign of interest on hearing a sudden noise or the roar of some animal inimical to themselves, but my friend at the entrance gave no sign whatever, but remained sniffing about.

After about five minutes he decided to take himself off, for which I was duly grateful.

For half an hour more I remained quiet with my eyes glued to the cave mouth, listening to the rise and fall of the mysterious and intermittent cries and wailings mingled with the ghastly rending, snarling and snapping of the battling leopards.

After a while the sounds of the fight died away, but those weird shrieks and moanings still came at intervals.

Although nigh frozen with cold I would not stir from my ledge for some considerable time, but about 2 a.m. I could not hold out any longer. I scrambled down and crept slowly to the entrance, always ready to spring back and scramble up again at the least suspicious sound from outside.

There did not appear to be any movement about where the battle of the leopards took place, but I could see four dull-looking heaps lying in the snow that I correctly surmised to be bodies of the dead animals

While still peering out, my attention was drawn towards the towering white peak of the mountain directly in front and high above by a more than usual loud shrieking. The vertical pinnacle was lit up by the moonlight

Staring towards the spot from which the roaring appeared to come, I confess to being badly scared on seeing what I did

Something enormous and fearful looking that might be a species of monster from the long dead past came rushing down a winding trail of glittering ice, roaring and screaming with a rise and fall that made my hair bristle, thinking that it was dashing straight for my hiding place

The shrieking suddenly ceased and the thing—whatever it was—disappeared behind the lower snow-hills

Quickly going to my pack, I found my binoculars and with shaking fingers focussed them on the glistening white face of the mountain, and immediately located what appeared to be a deep groove or cleft in the ice that lay in a chute, from near the peak and running downwards in a straight line for about five thousand feet, then swinging about in gentle curves from side to side

While still staring at it I distinctly saw an enormous mass of ice that might be many tons in weight, slowly detach itself from one side of the cleft and slide glittering in the moonlight into the groove, and then to slide

downwards, slowly at first, but as the mighty mass gathered momentum the noise it made gradually increased into various and varying keys

As it flew down the hollow ice-chute for thousands of feet, the mass of ice meeting the upward rush of air created those weird sounds, carried far out in the stillness of the night, that were thought to be the shrieking and wailings of evil spirits by the superstitious people of the country

Of course, I never had any belief in the occult rubbish about evil spirits and such like nonsense, but who knows what strange animals or other form of life from prehistoric ages might not have survived and taken possession of those lonely mountain ranges, so little known to civilization through ignorance and superstition.

I stood a long time at the cave mouth during which I witnessed the descent of several masses of ice in the same manner, from all of which emanated those weird noises in varying keys according to the size and angular formation of the masses

Seeing that there did not appear to be any further danger from either wild animals or evil spirits, I again climbed to my ledge and slept until the morning

I felt I had quite enough of Tirich Mir and decided to make my way down to the ponies as soon as it was daylight and as quickly as possible

The descent was much more difficult than the upward climb, but with an urge behind me in the shape of snow leopards I did not waste much time

I arrived at the bivouac late in the afternoon and was shocked at what I found. One of my poor ponies had been killed by the leopards during the night and its remains lay strewn about. There was no sign of the other, but after a little examination of the surroundings I concluded that while his companion was being attacked he must have in his mad fright broken his tethering and got away. The situation was bad enough before, but now—what? Well, there was nothing for it but to find my way back to Kamda as best I could and to this end I started off without further delay.

By night I was clear of the foot-hills, but although tired and hungry I resolved to struggle on and put as much distance as possible between the leopards of Tirich Mir and myself.

Later, while sitting down for a short rest, I caught sight of something lying in the shale close by. It was an old gun of the "hammer and cap" pattern but covered in rust. Having an idea about it, I resolved to take it along, though the weight with my own gear was just about as much as I could manage.

To cut my story short, I limped into Kamda next evening with about the last ounce of strength in my body.

Half dead as I was with fatigue and hunger, I could not help but smile to observe the people of the village keeping at a distance from me, fearful of what the evil spirits might have done to me.

It appeared that my second pony galloped into the village the day before and that settled the matter in their minds as to the terrible fate that had overtaken me.

After a good dinner and a long sleep I was able to set the Malik's mind at rest as to my health, but I had no intention of giving him the full and true explanations about Tirich Mir and its wailings, and when he understood that I possessed a certain "charm" that protected me from all such evil spirits, he was quite satisfied and pleased

The old gun, as I surmised, belonged to the lost Ibrid Shah, and hearing that I found it on the mountain, confirmed the original story of his fate

When I left the village on my return journey it was with the respect and admiration of all, for the one and only man who *ever* had the courage to ascend Tirich Mir and brave its evil spirits

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## BANDITS' ATTACK ON A CARAVAN

IT was after midnight—in the winter of '96—that in the guise of a Waziri horse-dealer I quietly rode into the "compound" behind the old Dak Bungalow in Peshawar. Dismounting wearily, I walked towards a certain corner of the back verandah where I had an idea I would find my friend, Gazab Ali, the old *choukidar* (watchman), asleep, wrapped up in his well-worn *azai* (thick cotton quilt). A few words in Pukhtu, whispered close above him, brought him to his feet in an instant with a muffled "Janab! Staramusha!" to which I returned the "Khawarmushi! Gazab Ali," as I shook his hand. He was a staunch and trusted friend of long standing.

"Look to my horse, Gazab Ali, and feed him well for, as we have travelled far and over the wretched roads you know so well, he is as tired and as hungry as I, and that is saying much."

An hour later saw me clean shaven, dressed once more as a "Sahib" and doing justice to a cold *mirgha* (chicken), a hefty plate of *chupatties*, and a big bottle of excellent beer that materialized from somewhere under my old friend's mysterious influence.

At 10 o'clock next morning the Police Inspector called in accordance with the usual routine and leisurely departed after reading the entry in the "Visitors' Book"—

"J W Williams, Scenic Artist, Pennsylvania, U S A"

Next day, with the exception of a few hours' walking about Peshawar, wearing a sun hat and coloured glasses with the usual painting outfit strapped over my shoulder, I spent in bed, for two reasons. I was tired, and wished to remain unobserved as much as possible.

About 11 p.m. I sat in an easy-chair in the *dark* verandah chatting in Pukhtu with Gazab Ali, who leaning against a pillar close by watched the people passing on the road a hundred yards away, suddenly he whispered, "Sahib, one comes,"—and with the usual warning cough of a *chowkidar*, strolled off around the bungalow trailing his staff and humming the air of "Zakimi-i-Paighambu"

Half a minute later a very inconspicuous little man (European) entered the verandah, stood for a moment or two until he located me in the chair, then quietly remarked that the "night was rather chilly," and in a like tone I replied "It is so—*undoubtedly*." He then passed along the verandah and, without pausing, brushed his hand along a small table near the door of another room at the end, into which he disappeared, and that was the last I saw of him

Waiting a few minutes, I lazily got out of my chair and passing by the far door quickly picked up the small, brown paper packet I found there and slipped it into my pocket. I walked up and down outside for ten minutes, then went to my room

Instructions from our "General Manager" were in the little packet

Before dawn, again a Waziri horse-dealer, I said good-bye to my old friend, the *chowkidar*, and was on my way.

A month later "the scene was changed"! Once more as the *Afzana-go* (the Wandering Story-teller), my usual rôle while up north of the *Amu-daruja* (the Oxus). My wanderings now took me through the Kabaghan country north of Badakhshan, through Tajikistan and over the Garufshan and Turkestan mountain ranges, that in those days were, and probably still are, the haunt of some of the worst brigands that Central Asia could boast of, but,

travelling as the *Afzana-go*, I had ever a safe conduct even from the rapacious bandits that roamed the mountains, preying on caravans and rich traders that travelled over the tablelands from Samarkand in the west to Kashgar in the east, and through the mountain passes to Badakhshan in the south

After the usual crop of hardships and difficulties concomitant to such work as mine, wandering through that mountain wilderness, I was caught one evening in a terrific storm of rain and hail, and while crouching for shelter under some high cliffs I was startled by a voice from somewhere above saying, "Ho ! Afzanoo, come up here "

On looking up, I caught sight of a young fellow of about seventeen or eighteen standing in the opening of what proved to be a small cave I made no delay in accepting the invitation and was soon beside him in the welcome shelter and made each other's acquaintance without much formality.

After an hour or so, seeing that there was no sign of the storm ceasing, we decided to stay there for the night

The boy—his name was Yusa Beg—proved very friendly and a great help He had been there a couple of hours before my coming and had collected quite a bundle of dry faggots, and would have had a fire but that he had no way to light it, but we soon got over that little difficulty as I had some matches

He was an Usbeg, from Sedgki, his parents being dead ; he was on his way to Jasak, " where he had an uncle "

Next day we took the road together, arriving in the evening at the village of Bagh-i-Sar where we stayed for the night , the boy quietly assuming the rôle of *chela* or pupil and as such shared in all benefits His pleasant voice

in song accompanied by my sithara was a helpful diversion to my stories and much appreciated by the people of the village. In this manner we travelled together for days. He was boyish and good tempered and laughingly insisted on carrying my pack. He had a light and amusing style in his chatter and would often break into some wild mountain song, when the look in his eyes would tell of some deep feeling that showed his love for the open ranges.

Arriving in the village of Kishlag on the northern slopes of the Turko range, we gathered the information that the dreaded brigand, Khan Aza, the Tartar, with his band was in the ranges somewhere east of Damburachi.

This rumour did not worry me in the least for I knew that the *Afzana-go* was as much a favourite with the robbers as with everyone else.

Two days later we came to the village of Zombari where we found that a big caravan of merchandise had just arrived from the direction of Kashgar by the Shar-i-Mardan route, and with the usual confusion, clatter and noise of shouting men and screaming camels, was "pitching camp" for the night, half a mile or so from the village.

The arrival of such a big caravan, consisting of about two hundred camels besides horses and mules and about one hundred well-armed Tajiks, seemed a matter of great interest to my young companion, Yusa Beg, who could hardly be dragged away from the sight, but having seen many such, and being hungry and tired, I pulled him along to the village where we would have food and rest.

Next day I would have preferred to rest, but the boy was all impatience to see the encampment and persuaded me to accompany him to see all the wonderful things brought from far-away Kashgar and Singkiang.

While strolling near the camp, a well-dressed young man met us and said that his master, the great Rahan Tchen, chief and owner of the caravan, *condescended* to invite us to pass the night in his camp

This happened, just as my young companion surmised, but the "*condescend*" did not please me, so I began to make excuses, such as illness, etc., but Yusa took me aside and pleaded that he would be broken-hearted if I refused, as he would never get the chance again of seeing such sights "But," I argued, "we are the guests of the village Malik, and we promised him songs and stories to-night, so how can we be discourteous and leave his house for another It cannot be"

But the lad was cunning, going to the young man he sadly informed him of the difficulty and suggested something. The young fellow went away and we returned to the village

A while later the same young man rode into the village and called on the Malik with an invitation from his chief that the Malik with his friend might have food with him after sun-down That was how Yusa managed it

We accordingly proceeded to the camp in the evening and made the acquaintance of Rahan Tchen, the rich caravan leader He had the typical appearance of the very wealthy oriental, very big, very fat, very boastful and arrogant beyond bearing

During the meal, which was of excellent quality and well served by the women of his house, we sat on beautiful carpets spread on the floor of the big tent He boasted loudly of his great wealth and his success as a caravan chief and had quite a lot to say about Khan Aza, the Tartar, and what he would do to him if ever he dared to come within his reach

"But," he continued, "the paltry rascal knows me and is afraid to come within twenty miles of me. He will not forget what I did to his dirty rabble two years ago near Garchuk."

While he was boasting of this occurrence I caught a strangely concentrated look in my young companion's eye as he stared at the big man.

The incident to which he alluded was that, one day while foraging among the foot-hills his *Sirdar* (Chief Officer) came across a small party encamped by a stream—two old men, one old woman and two small girls.

He dragged them all into Rahan Tchen's presence reporting that they were Khan Aza's people. Rahan ordered that the two old men and the woman be promptly hanged, and took the girls away to be sold as slaves. Those poor old people were the father, mother and uncle of Khan Aza, and the girls, his uncle's children, his cousins.

Some little time after, Rahan Tchen received a very polite message from Khan Aza, the Tartar, saying he would have the great pleasure of paying Rahan a visit in the near future. The message did not seem to please him at all and in his vexation he filled himself with liquor.

After dinner we were conducted to another very large tent, comfortably furnished with all kinds of rugs and soft cushions, and here, to the whispering accompaniment of my small sithara, I told the story of the immortal "Leila and Majnoon," their great love and their sad fate.

Seated among the women, I could not help but notice a beautiful young girl of sixteen or seventeen years old, who with her fine dark eyes ever fixed on myself was so

intently wrapped up in the story with all its romance and adventure that she was completely lost to her immediate surroundings

Yusa Beg then sang a couple of songs, after which the young girl, whose name was Louava (Rahan's only daughter), served us with glasses of lemon tea and Russian vodka

Next day we strolled about the big encampment "seeing the sights" as my young companion said—he showing an extraordinary interest in everything, but in particular the general "lay out," such as the position of everyone's tents, etc. I joked him about it then, but I learned later on

I was interested in the camels as I had much to do with them in India. While walking among them, I observed that dozens of them were suffering with "gar", a very painful and infectious kind of mange peculiar to camels in those high countries, and just here "my six months' Military Veterinary Course in Lahore" proved beneficial. I compounded a very useful wash that not only stopped the infection but would eradicate it altogether

Rahan and his people were extremely grateful, so that when, three days later, the caravan took the road again Yusa and I, very much to our satisfaction, were invited to accompany it as guests of the chief

Every night when the camp had settled down and after the evening meal we sat in the big tent where my stories and Yusa's singing were much appreciated by Rahan and his family, and in particular by Louava, his beautiful daughter, who would stay to listen all night if we did not plead fatigue

Rahan had ordered that a camel which carried us both be given for our convenience and on him we jogged along, generally a mile or two behind the caravan

One afternoon, following in the track of the caravan that had passed possibly half an hour before, we suddenly came on one of the camel drivers lying by the wayside

Both hands and feet had been hacked off with a sword and he was left there to bleed to death and be devoured by the lynn that infested the hills. He informed us that a case of liquor belonging to the chief had been carelessly loaded on his camel and falling off was smashed, all the bottles being broken. This was the punishment ordered by Rahan Tchen.

Nothing could be done for the man as he was bleeding to death and was even then near his end. We gave him some water and remained with him until he died—half an hour later. Such was Rahan Tchen's sense of justice.

On the evening of the seventh day the camp was pitched near the village of Rukh, and here young Yusa Beg left us, saying that he had found some friends who were going towards his uncle's home and he intended to accompany them.

I was sorry to part with the boy—he was such a cheerful companion, and his singing was an excellent foil to my stories. As we parted he said we might meet again, and I hoped we would, but thinking of my business, I was doubtful.

Two days later we camped in a narrow valley, close to a small river, the name of which—if any—I never knew, about thirty miles from Tyhue. When it was dark the sentries were posted around the camp as usual and in the big tent the evening was pleasantly passed as before, but without our singing boy.

Some time about 3 o'clock in the morning I was suddenly awakened by the sound of shooting, men shouting and the excited barking of dogs. Sitting up in bed, I caught the glare of firelight from outside and thought of going out

to see what it was all about, but before I could clear the sleep from my senses I caught the sound of canvas rending and my tent was torn open by the slashing of big knives I scrambled to get hold of my revolver that I always kept hidden under my clothing, but before I could get to it where it was strapped to my side under my shirt, half a dozen men were on top of me and in a few seconds had me tied up in my own blanket, and carrying me at a run through a crowd of fighting men toward the rising ground outside the camp and on to a hillock, roughly dumped me down On my protesting loudly some one pulled the blanket from my head and growled—

“ You lie here, *Afzana-go*—you are in no danger ”

By then a number of tents were blazing, while in and out between them the fight was raging In the red glare of the blazing camp men looked like devils as they fought and chased each other in and out and all around, hacking, slashing, shooting, cursing and screaming in a way that would well compare with the wildest and most ghastly scenes from Dante's Inferno

I had a good idea as to what it all meant Khan Aza, the Tartar, with his “ merry men ” was evidently paying his promised visit to Rahan Tchen, who from what I could see of the amenities, didn't seem to appreciate it noticeably

For the next half hour during which the fight raged I was left where I lay, four men with guns crouching close by, making running remarks bearing on the course of the fight

“ What a curse that we are left out of it for the sake of this— ”

“ Shut up, Pruga, we got our orders and we must obey

— ”

"Oh, but look," growled another man, "there he goes! Whagh! a clean cut and the head spinning——"

An interruption to their remarks came as three mounted men galloped up with a spare horse and some instructions that resulted in my head being again tied up in the blanket while my legs were freed. I was lifted into a saddle and in the midst of a number of mounted men clattered away from the wrecked camp, quickly losing the noise of the combat.

We must have ridden for five or six miles and splashed through a couple of small rivers with the icy water to the horses' girths and to the sharp discomfort of my bare legs. We now began the ascent of some steep hills with a great deal of twisting and turning, through which the bitterly cold winds tore and whistled about us, against which my blanket was but a flimsy protection. At last we came to a halt in the midst of a number of people—by their chattering I was lifted out of the saddle and hustled up into the welcome shelter of what I guessed was a cave, where I was freed from the roped blanket, a light was brought and a man placed a bundle on the skin-carpeted floor, saying—

"Here, Afzanoo! Your clothes and all your other possessions"

In a short time the same man brought in a kettle of hot tea and a handful of *nan-i-masla* (dough-bread and butter), a very welcome offering after my recent experience.

Late in the evening, I was conducted through a long narrow defile that opened out to a wide enclosure girdled around with high cliffs of grey rock. My conductor pulled aside a heavy skin-curtain and led me into a vast cave well lighted and with the welcome glow of a big fire burning in the centre.

The floor was covered ankle-deep in skins and soft carpets, then I had a surprise, for on a raised and cushioned *machan* was seated the man, or from his appearance I would be inclined to say "*monster*", who was known as Khan Aza, the Tartar, and the terror of the mountains for hundreds of miles around. I could find it easy to understand why he was named the "terror", but in this respect I hardly think that his depredations as a bandit could possibly merit the title in preference to his personal appearance.

To convey a true description of him is not easy. First, one could not help being held with his small black and piercing eyes with more than the usual upward slant typical of the Mongolian, then would come his cavernous and flabby-lipped mouth, his big, yellow wolf-like fangs forever showing in a devilish grin that was supposed to be a smile, and a broad, flat nose with wide nostrils forever contracting and dilating. Not above five feet in height, but with a torso so enormous that could only be likened to that of a monstrous gorilla. His head was twice the size of that of the ordinary man, with the back of it full six inches higher than the front, and a straggling mop of dull, reddish hair that grew down to his slanting eyebrows. When standing up, his long arms, like tree roots, hung to within eight inches of the ground, his strength must have been equal to that of six ordinary men.

In all my life I have never come across such a repulsive specimen of the human race. He was a surprise undoubtedly, but there were others to come, one of which was even more repulsive to my mind than the bandit's personal appearance. The first, was that seated on the cushioned *machan* and apparently in pleasant conversation with Khan Aza was my young companion—Yusa Beg.

With a friendly grin on his good-looking face he jumped off the *machai* and grasped my hands, saying—

"Oh, Afzanoo! I am very glad to meet you again. You remember? I said we might meet. Come now and speak with the Khan—my own brother. I have told him all about you and he ordered his men to protect you during the fighting."

For a moment I looked at the lad and gasped in a whisper—"Your brother—Yusa!"

"Yes," he replied, "and the dearest brother and best friend in all the world."

My conversation with Khan Aza was of the briefest, pertaining, on his part, to expressions of gratitude for my friendship and assistance to his young brother.

Next day the whole outfit broke up into separate bands and moved off by different routes through the hills, all converging on their main stronghold where we arrived in the evening of the fourth day.

As we rode together—Yusa and I—he gave me the full story of the adventure. His brother had ever in his mind the memory of their poor old parents' fate at the hands of Rahan Tchen. He had but one thought in life—Revenge! and to that end made his plans. After long waiting he managed, with the assistance of his clever young brother, to obtain full knowledge of the caravan's working and the movements of its leader. That rainy evening when Yusa was sheltering in the cave, he was trailing the caravan. Seeing me on the road, gave him the idea of a plan on which he was quick to act. Recognizing me as an *Afzana-go*, he resolved to make my acquaintance and, if possible, attach himself to me as my *cheln*, which would give him the opportunity of getting in touch with the men of the caravan.





MAN AYA AND HIS BRIDE LUAVA

and finding out all about its working In this he succeeded even beyond his hopes and, at last, when he was in possession of all details necessary for his purpose, he left us and went to advise and help his brother, who was not slow to act

The bandits' stronghold in the heart of the mountains was quite a colony or community with their wives, children and relations of all kinds

The night of our arrival was one of feasting, music, dancing and general enjoyment in a great cave that had been transformed into a veritable palace—and now came the greatest surprise of all

After an excellent dinner the Khan, Yusa and I were seated conversing on the *machan* when a heavy, silken *forash*, hanging before a high opening, was thrust aside and a young girl, a vision of beauty in silk garments of glowing colours, came flying towards us She just floated on to the *machan* and with a gurgling laugh of joy and happiness threw herself on that brutish specimen of manhood—her lovely bare arms around his neck and covering his repulsive face with kisses as if he were the Adonis of all the world Yusa chuckled, but my eyes nearly popped from my head when I recognized the girl—Luava! the beautiful young daughter of Rahan Tchen, the rich trader I felt positively sick with disgust, so making some light remark as to certain occasions when the presence of even "best friends" may be slightly inconvenient, I very politely took my leave

A week later, with a small escort Yusa and I departed from the bandits' stronghold Five days' journey brought us to a certain place near a small river, where from the branches of a tall tree I caught sight of the hanging bodies of eight men, all in the costume of the caravan followers,

the highest body, easily recognized by its size, being that of Rahan Tchen

Our party halting to view the spectacle, Yusa came close to me saying, "Afzanoo, I brought you here specially to show you the place and the very tree on which Rahan Tchen hanged our parents Rahan Tchen, his *Sirdar* and the men who carried out his orders, are now hanging on the same tree Afzanoo, I must now leave you, but in my heart will forever be the memory of our friendship—Farewell!" and clasping my hands once, he turned his horse and with his men cantered away

So, with a jangle of thoughts in my confused brain, on the frailty of human life and in particular—of woman—that from down the ages—Oh! but what does it matter! It was ever so and, I guess, will remain so

A fortnight later I arrived in Ura Lyuhe where I successfully accomplished *the deal* in accordance with instructions

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## MY ATTEMPT TO ENTER LHASSA

MANY years have passed since then, but when I remember the glorious thrills that life on the Indian Frontiers held for the soldier, I look back with regretful and vain longing for the return of those long dead years

I was young then—very young indeed Adventure! Romance! The Unknown, and all that was wild and strange was my life and soul

Before going to India I had read much of the East and listened with avidity and breathless interest to the stories told by old soldiers who had served out there Stories of dazzling splendour, untold wealth, old palaces and romantic castles of the mighty Emperors who ruled that glowing land, asleep in the moonlight—and still breathing of the life and laughter and loves of lovely, jewel-decked princesses that once graced their halls and with soft, tinkling footsteps strolled with their lovers through the flower-scented gardens in the cool hours of night

My soul was overcharged with longing and unquenchable desire to see it all and dream in its magic beauty

On my arrival in India, I was enchanted with everything. There was nothing wherein I did not find charm and mystery, the only obstacle to my complete happiness and exaltation was the language difficulty and this I was determined to master without delay I began at once, a good old munshi for the literary stage, and for the colloquial I had free and unlimited practice in the bazaars, villages and among the servants As from childhood I possessed an extraordinary aptitude for languages, my progress was, to say the least, phenomenal So much for a beginning

About the end of 1887 there arose some trouble between the Indian Government and Thibet that necessitated the despatch of a small "Expedition" to Sikkim, a small and "independent" state under British suzerainty, lying between India and Thibet

The two countries—Sikkim and Thibet—are closely affiliated in language, religion, customs, habits and general conditions of life to such an extent that Thibet—the greater and much more powerful—came to consider Sikkim as part of herself, sent over her officials and certain forces and proceeded to annex it. This did not quite suit the Indian Government, whose protégé Sikkim was

Letters of protest were sent to the Thibetan officials who ignored and treated them with contempt, therefore the Expedition, or "Friendly Mission" as the newspapers *diplomatically* termed it. It was composed of one British and two Indian regiments with a British Mountain Battery of six guns, a company of sappers and miners and the necessary transport mules, all under the command of Brigadier-General Graham, with Mr Paul, I C S, as Commissioner

To my unbounded delight I was appointed to serve with the Transport

Thibet ! Lhassa ! the mysterious and forbidden ! Every fibre in my being strained and tanged with wild impatience to get there. The mighty Himalayas ! The roof of the world ! Oh, but it was glorious !

Now I don't intend to go into details of the Expedition itself or of its clashes with the Thibetan Forces at Phadimchin, Lingtu, Jalap-la and Renchingong, but will confine myself to my own story—my great venture in attempting to enter the forbidden city of Lhassa

My first object was the Thibetan language and its dialects I began at once, and with the assistance of an old Lama at Dulupchin made such rapid progress that my Commanding Officer sent for me one evening to say that as I was the only man who had any knowledge of the language, I was given the job of raising and organizing a Coolie Corps, 500 strong, composed of whatever material I could find I found the material alright It seemed as if fate really intended to help me to realize my ambition, and that was to enter Lhassa

My Corps of Coolies was composed of a motley gathering of men and women Thibetans, Sherpas, Denjos, Durma Bhuteas, Nepalese and Lepchas, every one of them capable of carrying loads of 120 lbs each, a whole day's march, through a country whose only roads were no better than goat tracks For some months we worked as supply convoys from Jaluktso over the ice-bound Pass of Lingtu (the "Hill of the Seven Winds"), 13,000 ft high, and onward over the Jalap-la (16,000 ft), as our mules not being able to keep their feet on the icy slopes, were being lost daily

The boys humorously gave my ragged Corps the title of "d'Auvergne's Tribe," and as such it remained to the end of the Campaign They might laugh and make fun of my wild tribe, but had it not been for their sturdy services under the most difficult circumstances and inclement weather, the troops would often have had to tighten their belts and go to sleep imagining they had something to eat when they hadn't

Not one of my crowd could speak any language but his or her own, it was a good opportunity for me to become thoroughly acquainted with the various dialects, and you may be sure I took full advantage of it.

After a year or so of this work, I would often dress in the "rig" of one of my men (of course I know what you are thinking of, but our own clothes were not much cleaner !) and could with ease pass as one of the "tribe".

All this time my project was maturing. Never a day passed but I did my best to develop the scheme a little more. I *would* go to Lhassa.

Among the people of my "tribe" there was an old couple of Durma Bhuteas, man and wife, whose friendship I cultivated from the beginning. Often, when one or the other was out of sorts and not up to work, I would quietly show them some little favour by excusing them. I would leave them in camp to do light work while the others carried their heavy loads up and over the Passes for weary miles.

At last I came to an understanding with those two, who having saved their pay wished to return to Bhutan and attend to their own affairs there. I promised them 500 rupees if they would assist me as far as laid in their power and as an earnest of my promise gave them 100 rupees in advance.

Our arrangement was that they should resign from my Corps and proceed to Bhutan by the Pemberingo Pass and wait for me in a certain little village where I would meet them on a date three weeks later, for I had calculated that it would take me about three weeks to do the journey by the route we planned, doing about fifteen miles *nightly*. The route by Phari-dzong and Gyantze-dzong through the Chumbi valley was, of course, the more direct way, but that was in the hands of the Thibetan troops.

My next move was to stage a fall from a mule, and after a little trouble managed to obtain three months' leave on medical certificate, then making over command of my

"tribe" to another man, temporarily, I quietly left Pedong for Siliguri, arriving there in the early hours of the morning, disguised as a Denjo Bhutea, and made my way across country to Mandari-hat in Kutch Behar. From there I had no difficulty in finding my way over the Bhutanese border from Tier and as far as Zalpha on the Lhubru river. Although I had no fear of being recognized as an European, my disguise and language being perfect, still I considered it advisable to do my travelling—which was all *on foot*—by night, there were always plenty of places among the hills where I could rest and sleep during the day in perfect security.

Ten days after crossing the Bhutan border and without more difficulties than were to be expected when wandering through a strange, wild and mountainous country, I arrived at Lha Kiang Dzong where I had arranged to meet the old couple. As it was about 3 o'clock of a dark, rainy morning, I had some difficulty in finding the hut outside the village that was their home. They were very pleased to see me and, apparently, fired by my own enthusiasm were quite prepared to carry out our plan.

After a rest and some food the old man—whose name was Gyami-dzo—went into the village and procured half a dozen samples of shellac in which product Bhutan does a big trade. I was supposed to be a prospector in the trade between Sikkim and Bhutan in case questions were asked, but while in Bhutan territory there would be no trouble, for the people are not of an inquisitive or interfering kind. They are simple and mind their own business. Lha Kiang Dzong was the frontier between Bhutan and Thibet. After leaving there we had to be most careful as Thibet was forever on the watch for strangers, who were *not* welcome.

We three travelled together, each of us carrying our own bundle. We had no difficulty about lodgings when

the weather was bad, preventing us from camping out—as it is a recognized custom that travellers are always welcome in any family without question. My first night's lodging in a small village, although welcome shelter from the rain and bitter cold, was a somewhat uncomfortable experience. Although inured to all the rough conditions of camp life such as sharing a bell-tent with fifteen others wherein we had to lie "heads and tails" when necessary, I found the sleeping arrangement in our lodging-house rather more than unconventional to say the least. There were nine of us all told, three men, four women and a couple of dirty youngsters, in one room which we reached from the ground by climbing a tree trunk in which notches were hacked out to serve as a ladder that leaned against the side of the house, which was, raised on wooden piles. We three—my two old companions and I—brought our own food with us, the others prepared their own food in a kind of rough kitchen adjoining which seemed to be for general use. After food, a long, thick felt mattress about five feet broad, was unrolled along one side of the same room and each and every one just rolled himself or herself in a *galecha* or thick, coarse blanket and just lay down where they were. I had an old dame of seventy or so on one side of me and a scrubby little brat on the other.

There was absolutely no ventilation, and although I was cold, tired and sleepy, I quickly found that, for me, sleep was impossible. That family mattress! It was alive with vermin. The snoring, breathing and fetid atmosphere was bad enough, but compared with the energetic activities of the mattress "live stock" it was sweetness! When all were asleep I picked up my blanket and crept out to the cooking place where I passed the remainder of the night on the hard boards.

Next morning, as my companions and myself were having some Bhutca tea, *sweetened* with salt and butter, the old

dame who was my neighbour in the sleeping apartment tottered out with a cheery grin that exhibited the beauty of her one big yellow tooth and straggly, grey whiskers and took a mug of tea with us She hoped I had a good night's sleep !

It was the first and only night I risked the comfort of a "community" bed Of course, my two companions quite understood and ever after assisted me to dodge the usual kind invitation to the comfort of the nice, warm communal bed, the excuse being that on account of an accident—a severe wound in the head, which I always showed—I was in the habit of talking and shouting in my sleep which annoyed everyone in the room , therefore, I always slept in the cooking room and on a few occasions on a bundle of straw with the cow under the house, between the piles

And now I have to tell of the first spot of trouble that befell us

While crossing an extremely difficult range of hills that lay between the little village of Lingtai Dzong and Tsangdu, we were overtaken by a terrific storm of rain, sleet and a piercing cold wind For over an hour we struggled through it, wet, cold and miserable, with Gyami's old wife linked between us, as she was unable to walk alone On descending the northern slopes, we were fortunate to stumble on a cave and took possession of it at once We had food with us, but there being nothing in the shape of fuel to be found anywhere, we were forced to remain all night in our wet clothes Next morning Gyami's dear old wife was in a raging fever

All that day we did what we could to give her assistance , they were my friends and I was resolved to find help somehow I started off on my return to Tsangdu

where I arrived about 4 o'clock in the morning and succeeded in obtaining the assistance of two women and a boy who brought with them certain herb simples that are recognized in Thibet as being the medicine most effective in fever cases. Arriving at the cave in the afternoon, we found that the woman was no better, in fact, from her appearance and condition, I had a feeling that she would not recover. We brought milk and other necessaries and now all we could do was to wait, but it was all no use for our patient died next morning before sunrise. As it was not possible to dig a grave, the hills all around being but masses of rock, we gathered large stones and piled them over the body in a corner of the cave. There was nothing more we could do. We compensated the two women and the boy who returned to Tsangdu. Poor old Gyamu was terribly cut up—they were very much attached to each other—but like the plucky old boy he was, he insisted on accompanying me to the end of my journey.

As Lingta Dzong was rather an important place, we made a wide detour and got to the small village of Charap where I had to share diggings, again in the straw, with a cow and a couple of goats for company, but it was preferable to the "community" bed and its *comfort*.

Next day we reached the Sangpo river that we had to cross, we found a small boat tied up under the rocks, and as night was falling we took possession as there was no one near the place to whom it belonged. After a feed of cold boiled pork and some half-cooked dough made from rye flour we rolled ourselves in our *galechas* and went to sleep in the boat to await the coming of the owner in the morning. I can't say how long we slept, but we awoke to the rocking of the boat and the wash of water under it. We were adrift and moving fast with the current, which unfortunately was running southward in the direction from which we came.

When at last we managed to land, after furious paddling with our hands, we found we were half way back to the small village we left that morning. It was a big waste of time, but it couldn't be helped, we had to make it up somehow. Gyami was a tough and wiry old mountaineer, and as for myself—I was young, healthy and fired by my great ambition. I simply *couldn't* tire.

All went fairly well with us after the mishap in the boat until we reached Tsetang, not far from another crossing place on the river. For half a day we waited in a small *tehim* or wooden hut until the owner of the ferry returned from an outlying village where he had gone on some business the previous day. There being now no sign of his return, Gyami went to his house to try and make arrangements for our crossing. When he returned he was accompanied by a young woman, whose appearance very much astonished me. In height she must have been six feet eight inches, and in weight not less than nineteen stone, built in proportion and undoubtedly as strong as a horse. A splendid animal! An Amazon of the Khambas—the warrior tribe of Thibet.

She consented to ferry us across the river for three *tankas* (about half a crown) which we agreed to pay after the usual bargaining.

Oh, but it was a sight to see that young woman handle the heavy oars as she drove the old ferry through the strong current in the broad river, but when about half way across I noticed that she kept staring at me with a most unpleasant intensity. It looked as if she thought she recognized me and was trying to place the where and the when. I became annoyed and uncomfortable and felt that even through the walnut stain on my face I was getting red. I was, as I said, annoyed and began to stare at her in like manner, but it didn't seem to disconcert her in the least. I became still

more surprised when suddenly she stopped rowing and leaning her big arms on the oars addressed me, "Friend, were you ever in Renchingong?"

The question startled me and set me thinking furiously, but as Renchingong was what might be termed the "customs" on the trade-route between Thibet and Sikkim and known to everyone, it would have been foolish to deny it, so replying—

"Yes, sister, I have been to Renchingong in my capacity as a trader in shellac. Why do you ask and what do you know of it?"

"But," she replied, ignoring my question, "have you been there during the fighting with the *Kujodzo*?" (the British)

"No," I replied "I was in Shigatze at the time"

"And so was I," added Gyami, who was well acquainted with Shigatze. "We stayed in Lama Shungdo's Hlagha. Do you know the place, my daughter?"

She made no answer to this but picked up her oars and pulled without speaking again during the crossing, we paid the Amazon her three *tankas*, picked up our bundles and tramped away

I had a very uncomfortable feeling that the woman was suspicious about something what had we better do? I told Gyami not to look back as I guessed that she stood looking after us until we disappeared over the brow of the hill

Our intention was to go forward towards Gaden Gampa, an important village that lay about 28 miles to the east of Lhassa, but considering our suspicions regarding that young woman, we changed our route, and when sure she could not see us we struck backward through the range of wild

and rugged hills, not daring to go near a village of any kind, fearing that she might make enquiries. It was dark when we decided to camp for the night in one of the many caves to be found among the deep ravines, and as we were tired it did not take us long before we were asleep, wrapped in our *galechas*.

And here it was that the strangest and most annoying experience of my venture overtook me and put an end to all my hopes.

I slept well and awoke about dawn, hungry and healthy, with renewed hopes regarding the near realization of my desire, but how to express my astonishment and alarm when, instead of seeing old Gyami who was always first about in the morning, my eyes were drawn to the awe-inspiring figure of the young woman of the ferry! Looking around me in a perplexed manner for my old friend who had gone to sleep in a corner of the cave, I did not see him. Then as I sat up, I spoke to the woman who was quietly leaning against the entrance to the cave with her big arms folded across her chest.

"Hullo!" I said, "what are *you* doing here? What do you want? Where is my friend, Gyami?"

"Your friend is quite all right," she replied with a grin. "No harm will come to him unless *you* make trouble, for which there is no necessity. I have something to talk about, *Kuzho*, and we must talk alone."

So she addressed me as *Kuzho*! That meant that she knew I was an European. Well, I decided, there was only one thing for it—for I was determined that nothing should spoil my plans and this fool of a woman seemed to be a menace—I reached into my *khola* for my revolver, but before I could draw it she was on me with the spring of a tigress.

I was but a child in her hands! In a moment she had twisted the revolver from my grip and catching up my *dah* (short sword) that was lying near my *galecha*, threw both away to the end of the cave, then standing up she said—

“ *Kuzho*, it will be best for you to be quiet ”

I was beginning to think so too

“ Well,” I shouted, “ what do you want and why do you say *Kuzho* when you know I am a Durmo? ”

“ No good, *Kuzho*, she quietly said, “ I know you quite well, but now you are hungry, have some food, and we will talk after ”

So saying she unrolled a small bundle and took from it some excellent cold mutton, well-baked corn cakes and a *shingu* (a bamboo vessel) of Bhutea tea, at the same time telling me calmly to eat as we had a long way to go. This was a catastrophe and no mistake. What on earth did this animal of a woman intend to do? But I was to know very soon and the knowledge did not add to my happiness in the least.

When I had finished eating, I arose and proceeded to tie up my bundle as usual, then turned to the woman who, as before, quietly leaned against the wall with her hands clasped behind her, and demanded that she give me an explanation, and first to tell me what had become of my old friend.

“ Do not worry for your friend,” she replied “ By now he is some miles away towards his own country. I told him that I knew you were a *Kuzho* and that he would be beheaded if I handed him over to our *mag-mi* (soldiers) for aiding you in your attempt to enter Lhassa. You will not see him again.”

"Is that the truth?" I asked

"It is the truth," she replied, and I knew she was not lying. Well, I was sorry to lose the dear old chap, but I was more sorry for myself and the wreckage of my wonderful plans. If I could but get hold of my revolver I would not have had the least compunction about shooting the big brute, but she had it tucked away in her *khola* and kept my *dah* in her hand. I was helpless. Then she began to talk

"*Kuzho*, I am Pyidha, the widow of Tsarong Tempa, whom you or your people killed on the Jalap-la. Why should I not now kill you? I was at Renchingong when the Amban from China came to settle matters with your people. I saw you many times with the *yogdou* (coolies) and once I saw you dressed as you are now. I do not mistake in recognizing you. What have you to say?"

What on earth could I say? The woman was mad, and thinking so, I wondered if a little "soft sawder" might not be of some use, though the appearance of the subject to be operated on did not encourage its application very much.

"*Akoree*," I began—which is a nice endearing term in Thibetan, about equal to the Irish of *acushla*—"I did not kill your husband nor did I kill anyone else (if some of my comrades heard me they might doubt my words), for as you said yourself you saw me as *Sirdar* of the coolies and our work was to carry up supplies and not to fight. So if you kill me—and I don't think you will—you will be unjust—a grave offence against the words of the great Buddha."

Her reply, with a frown, was

"Do you think I will not kill you? Do you think I am not able?" and her two big arms were thrust towards me in a threatening manner and as if to show me their power I made no reply but walked towards her and laughed. She

also laughed, and her laughter made me shiver. There was madness in it. I had no hope of finding in her the least womanly feeling.

"Now," she began, "will you tell me the truth as to why you came here?"

I told her the whole story. still leaning against the rock and looking out over the hills, she appeared for some minutes to be considering what I told her, then turning to me—

"Now listen, *Kuzho*, you wish to enter Lhassa without being recognized and I can arrange everything for your success, but—(I was waiting for that 'but') only on one condition. You speak our language well and you say you like our country, so why not remain in it always? Why not become my husband as now I have none. Your people killed him. If you agree, I will take you safely to Lhassa, but if you do not—" and here a meaning grin and a fingering of my revolver was a sufficiently comprehensive ending to what she had to say.

Now, as I knew the woman was not quite sane, I had no intention of angering her by playing the hero and giving her a contemptuous refusal, instead—I thought—there might be some useful policy in temporising.

"If I agree," I replied, "when and under what circumstances would we get married?"

"When we arrive in Gaden Gampa," she said, "as the Lama there is my uncle. He will marry us."

"No," I objected, "I will agree to marry you in Lhassa—only. I have heard that it is a very holy city and a marriage entered into there will be most propitious and happy, and Lhassa is but a couple of days' journey from here."

After some consideration she appeared to be satisfied with this, for she suddenly picked up both of our bundles, saying simply

"Come, let us go"

All that day we travelled through the hills, resting occasionally—at least I did—but the Amazon did not seem to need any rest, for on those occasions and when I had something to eat, she would walk backward and forward like a caged tigress, muttering to herself most of the time

As night was coming on the clouds began to gather and grow darker with every mile we travelled. This foreboded an ugly storm of some kind, but of the kind that *did* come we hardly appreciated its quality beforehand. The woman at last seemed to realize the situation for she increased her pace to an extent that gave me something to do to keep up with her even at a jog-trot. Her long legs carried her over the ground much faster than mine under normal conditions.

With the storm came darkness which made matters a hundred times worse, but my companion refused to stop or seek for shelter under or among the big rocks, many of which were scattered about, but kept urging me on every few minutes.

"*Gyopshe! gyopshe!* (Hurry! hurry!) We must get to the ferry before the river rises with the storm!"

I was by now in a desperate state of mind and resolved to come into action of some kind on the very first chance of an opening. Half an hour later the chance came.

We debouched from the comparative shelter of a deep ravine on to an open track running along the river bank. I recognized the place from the previous day's travel and knew that the ferry-crossing was not more than half a mile onward.

The woman in her impatience to get there would every now and again forge ahead, bending her big body against the wind and lashing rain. When at last I observed she was some little distance ahead, I quickly threw off the Bhutea *khola* or overcoat and with half a dozen bounds on to some rocks overhanging the river, a moment's pause and I was into the dark, swirling water and being swept along in breathless speed. Just as I struck out towards the centre so as to keep clear of the rocks by the side, I heard a wild, mad scream and immediately after the sharp crack of a shot, followed by others that I knew were fired by the mad Amazon from my own revolver.

For the next hour in that dark, ice-cold river my experience was such that I hardly care to dwell upon it. I had no need for exertion as to swimming, for the current was so fierce it must have been not less than 15 miles that I was swept along before I, more dead than alive, crawled out and lay among the rocks shivering and miserable. After I had rested, I took to the hills and ravines in a direction that led, *not backwards*—the way that Gyam and I had come, for I had no doubt that the woman would quickly take steps to warn the villages *en route* on both sides of the river—but towards the west.

The memory of my wanderings through forests, over rivers and mountain ranges, and the hardship and misery I experienced, is still fresh and clear, but I find it somewhat painful to write about that just now.

I had no fear of being recognized as an European when I entered Sikkim by the old Pemberingo Pass just three months less a day after I left it.

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# INCIDENT

## AN OLD CAMPAIGN ON THE INDIAN FRONTIER

ON the North Eastern Frontier of India lies the small country of Sikkim, an "Independent" State governed by a Rajah but under British suzerainty.

There had been no trouble there of any kind since 1864 when the Bhutanese overran the country—even to the Teesta river, their ultimate object being the capture and plunder of Darjeeling with all its wealthy surroundings, but during 1887 Sikkim's powerful neighbour, Thibet, becoming affected with the same grasping enterprise of her more northerly neighbour, stretched out her claws towards inoffensive Sikkim.

The Rajah appealed to the political authorities at Gantok, who in turn waked up Simla and the powers that be, with the result that a small Frontier campaign was very soon in readiness to enter into an agreement with the lamas of Thibet.

It was my luck to be one of the component items—just a small one—of the campaign I have been through many campaigns since then and I have always found that incident—in its full sense—falls in more interesting details to the share of the practically insignificant component.

One wet and rainy evening with one assistant, to wit—Sergeant Patrick Hogan, or as he confidently explained—"Sure I'm Paddy Hogan from Ireland," I started off from Siliguri in charge of a supply convoy of 350 Army Transport mules.

A small detachment of a British regiment—the Derbyshire I think—had preceded us some hours before. Our route lay through the dense forest of the Teesta valley, that in those days approached to within a few miles of Siliguri and was infested with wild animals of all sorts—elephants, tigers, panthers and leopards—that during the course of the campaign that lasted for close on two years, took a heavy toll of our convoys. To some extent we could deal with those—at any rate in daylight—but the venomous snakes and boa constrictors were the horror that ever haunted us while in the forest.

My first acquaintance with those pests was when—about ten o'clock on that same night—floundering in the darkness through that wet and reeking jungle, I was suddenly startled by blood-curdling screams from one of my men plodding behind.

Quickly working my way through the line of mules, towards the point from where the screams were heard, I came upon a sight, dimly seen, by the shaking light of a hurricane lantern, the thought of which, to this day, makes my flesh creep, and creates a feeling of nausea. The poor fellow—one of my Panjaubī muleteers—was on the ground struggling in the slimy coils of a twenty-one-foot boa constrictor that had wrapped itself around his limbs, body and throat and was crushing him to death. I was considered a “steady hand” with a revolver, but I had to fire three times before I could manage to put a bullet through the reptile’s repulsive head as it wavered in the flickering light of the lantern.

Even when dead, its coils had such a terrible grip on the man’s body that it took half a dozen men some considerable time to loosen them, but it was all no use, the poor fellow was dead. Every bone in his body was broken.

AN UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCE IN THE FOREST





This was but one of the many incidents that our convoy had the misfortune to meet with as we struggled through the wet and darkness of that dreadful forest that night while trying to follow the trail of the troops in advance. Another was the stampeding of half a hundred loaded mules, scared by the growling of a tiger somewhere not far from the trail. This caused more than an hour's delay and the total loss of half a dozen mules with their loads, it being quite impossible to find them once they disappeared into the depths of the jungle, where the poor beasts fell a prey to the wild animals.

About one o'clock in the morning a glimpse of firelight somewhere ahead among the trees raised our hopes, and sure enough it was the "Derby" detachment in bivouac.

We proceeded to unload the mules and make camp a few hundred yards distant from the party. In so doing there is always a considerable lot of noise such as the shouting of the men one to another in the darkness, the hammering of picketing pegs, the rattle of tether chains and—not least—the yelling of the mules for their "nose-bags" and all the usual clatter connected with such occasions.

Evidently all this seemed to give annoyance to one of the detachment in the bivouac over the way, for my jamadars came to report that a "drunken soldier" from the troops close by was abusing and assaulting the muleteers, preventing them from doing their work. I hurried towards the point indicated and found the man, in shirt and trousers, in the act of kicking one of my men. "Hold on there," I shouted, getting in front of him. "Who the— are you and what the—do you think you are doing?" His reply—most unexpected—was more forcible than polite, for with a swing to the jaw I found myself sitting in the slush, having tripped over my own sword. Probably it was the heat of the

rum, in which it appeared he had so freely indulged, that urged him in an unsportsman-like manner, to try and kick me as I was on the ground, but fortunately he was prevented by my friend, the Sergeant, who with a growl threw his arms around him from behind saying—

“No, ye don’t, me bhoy, just wait a bit and ye’ll have as much as ye want” He held him until I got to my feet and rid of my belts with sword and revolver. For the next few minutes matters were lively enough, after which our visitor was carried over to his bivouac in a somewhat deflated condition by a few muleteers

That was the first “engagement” of the campaign, out of which the only distinction I earned was a black eye and a torn pair of pants

For the next few days our route led along the right bank of the Teesta river by Sibook, Kali Jora and Reeang. I could not understand why those names should exist when there were no villages or houses of any kind to fix them on to, nothing but jungle and rock

Early on the fourth morning our little force was carefully passed across the river by the recently constructed swing bridge, and to regulate the passage over—the bridge not being considered too safe—a young officer was stationed at the bridge-head. In passing, I casually noted that he was wearing dark glasses though there was no sun. On the contrary the morning was wet and overcast.

When all our mules were over, Hogan, who came across with the last troop, remarked with a cheerful grin.

“Oh, be dad Did you notice him? The gossoon wearing the goggles?” “Of course,” I replied “What about him?” “Oh, but sure, he had two o’ them, two such beautiful black eyes; ornamental decorations, and

such a lovely thick lip He asked me who you wor' and I told him you wor' the middle-weight champion av the Punjab He tried to smile, but tother end av his mouth worked the wrong way"

This is only a little incident not at all uncommon in the army

That day's march was all uphill by goat tracks, that the mules seemed better able to negotiate than the men We arrived in a place by name Kalimpong that consisted of one ramshackle hut—the residence of an old Nepalese couple and a dog

After picketing my mules among the bamboos behind a hill, we went off to look for something to eat We proceeded along a path that we thought might lead to a village of some kind, but it didn't seem to lead anywhere, on returning, we saw a hen crossing the path, we were hungry, so I shot it, we were not happy about it for it was an old cock of a very ancient pattern Hogan plucked it, to a running accompaniment of disparagement on its birth, breed and quality in general We made a fire of dried sticks over which that "ancient one" was roasted on the point of a sword, but alas! it had its revenge, for to chew the sole of a boot would have been far easier

A week later we were all camped in Pedong which was made our "Advance Depôt," and here our whole force assembled and prepared for the advance to Rhenok, across the *Rishu Choo* (or the Laughing River)

One Indian regiment with two mountain guns was deployed from Rhenok through the Pakyong valley towards Gantok This was called the "Inchi" Column that was intended to watch the Nathu-la Pass from the "Chumbi" valley into Sikkim.

The remainder of our force marched by *Are* over the Dulupchin ridge down through the "Poison Valley" and across the *Rungli Choo* (or Rolling Water), then, miserable days of clambering up and down the drenched hills by wet and slippery goat tracks until at last we got into touch with the Thibetans

About four o'clock in the afternoon we arrived at Sedonchin where only a cramped bivouac could be fixed for the night a hollow or "lip" in the hill-side, quite open from the forest-heights above and falling away to about seven thousand feet below There being no space to picket my mules, we took them back some five hundred yards or so and picketed them the best way we could among the trees

We were just settling down for the evening after a hard day's march, all uphill, when we were startled by the sound of a ragged volley of rifle fire from our camp above, quickly followed by indiscriminate shooting by, as it appeared to be, all three regiments This sounded a bit exciting Then came Paddy Hogan mounted on a bare-backed mule and leading another, bumping along towards me with his rifle hung over his shoulder, shouting his loudest—

"Oh! for the love av Saint Patrick come on or we'll miss all the fun"

Five minutes later we were at the bivouac and very much astonished to find it empty with the exception of about twenty wounded men who were being attended to by a couple of doctors and their assistants

It appears that the first intimation that the Thibetans were anywhere near, was the whirring sound of a flight of a thousand, three-foot, poisoned arrows, with flat, fish hook, iron heads that flew from the jungle high above and fell in a

shower all over the unsuspecting bivouac Many men were wounded and on account of the poison had to be attended to immediately

Noting the point from which the arrows came, the men of the "Derbys" and the Gurkhas were quickly pumping a rain of bullets into the jungle and, as proved later, with excellent results Orders were promptly given that, with the exception of one company to guard camp and wounded, both the regiments should rush the jungle and tackle them in their lair

The Gurkhas being well acquainted with the Thibetans' method of warfare, hardly waited for orders, but with *hookries* drawn and rifles loaded, dashed after them through the forest The British regiment quickly followed the Gurkhas but could never compete with those nimble little fellows at jungle fighting

For the next hour or so the fight was mostly of a "hide and seek" nature on account of the density of the jungle, but now and again in some open glade there would be a hand-to-hand clash

Hogan and I, eager to have our share of the fighting, leaving our mules in the camp to browse where they liked, scrambled up through the jungle to where we heard the noise of the scrummage, and very soon were in the middle of it, and, again, very soon felt that we were having more than our share, for the "Martin Henry" bullets of our own men were quite as dangerous to us as the arrows of the Thibetans

On one occasion five or six of the latter came dashing towards the rock that we had fixed as our firing base, when from behind them a dozen rifles of the "Derbys" began to pump lead We being in line of fire, had to duck down,

four fell but two survivors got to our rock where we were awaiting them Hogan got one with his rifle while the other fell to my revolver

It was utterly impossible for our men to keep in any kind of regular order on account of the irregularity of the ground that was just a jumble of hills, hollows, holes, rocks and tangle of forest, the consequence being that, not only did our men lose touch with each other, but the Thibetans were in the same muddle, their intention being to retreat upwards towards Jaluktso, but found themselves cut off by our Gurkhas and compelled to scatter in all directions It was every man for himself

A movement in the jungle fifty yards away and a shot just as easily got one of our own men as a Thibetan, or while stalking one of them the swish of a couple of arrows past one's ear showed that you were being stalked in turn

After a while Hogan and I fell in with four Gurkhas who had lost touch with their company, they were fine little fellows who knew all about the stalking game With them we certainly had our share of it for half an hour or so. Rifle bullets and poisoned arrows were flying in every direction I noticed that each of the Gurkhas was in possession of a Thibetan yak-hide shield collected from many Thibetans lying about who would not be likely to need them any more Those shields were very useful against the arrows when they came in flights over the trees

It was during a bit of skirmishing that I was witness to one of the most astonishing acts of pluck that ever came my way before or after One of the Gurkhas, a *naik* (corporal), in our little party suddenly stopped and held up his left hand in which an arrow was sticking He quietly pulled at the shaft that came away leaving the fish-hook head in the hand After a few words among themselves one

took a lace from his boots and tied it tightly half way between the elbow and hand. The *naik* then laid his arm on a fallen branch close by while another—his brother—raised his *kookri* and with a single stroke sliced off the hand about an inch above the wrist, as clean as if scientifically amputated. Not a murmur from the man, who when a dirty handkerchief was tied on the wrist, quietly shouldered his rifle, picked up the severed hand, and insisted on returning alone to camp to have the wound attended to by the doctor.

The remainder of us chased and dodged about the jungle with varying luck until it became too dark for further operations. A few bugle calls guided us back to camp.

“Roll-call” that evening was not a cheerful ending to the day’s adventure.

Next morning the Gurkha regiment followed up the Thibetans as far as Jaluktso while the remainder of the force searched the jungle and buried the dead. We had eighteen killed and eighty-five wounded, whereas the Thibetans’ loss was one hundred and ten killed and forty wounded.

They did not make a stand at Jaluktso but retreated to their principal stronghold—Lingtu (the Hill of the Seven Winds), high up on the snow-clad mountain top, fourteen thousand feet high.

We sent intimation by a denjo Bhutia to their General, saying that we would grant them permission to come and bury or remove their dead. When the Bhutia returned he said that the Thibetans only laughed at us for being such fools as to think of burying dead men or bothering about them at all, so the job of burying had to be undertaken by

Bhutias who were paid to do it, for it would not be possible to leave the bodies to fester and rot on our line of communication

At Jaluktso the snow was heavy and the cold intense. We passed a miserable night without shelter of any kind. Next day we made an attempt on the Lingtu heights seven miles above, but were stopped at Garnai, where the path—such as it was—had been cut away from the verge of the precipice for a distance of fifty yards and there was absolutely no other way. As the advance guard halted to consider the situation there came a warning noise from above, but before they had time to understand its cause an avalanche of rocks came rushing down with disastrous results among the men, six being swept into oblivion from the narrow track on which they had halted. The Thibetans had cleverly sprung a dozen "booby traps" that they had set high above the spot where they knew that our men would be compelled to halt.

The naturally precipitous conformation of the mountain lent itself to the easy construction of those "booby traps" as they were called, that consisted of a strong wooden platform holding a few tons of rock or "big boulders," each a hundred pounds in weight, carefully fixed so that the whole could be released in a moment by the simple twist of a lever that pulled away the main support.

One of the old Gurkha officers had warned us against those traps, but as usual, relying on our traditional self-sufficiency, we chose to ignore the warning.

As we could not advance beyond the point where the track was cut away and finding it impossible to remain there for the night, we were compelled—to the delight of the Thibetans—to retire down to Jaluktso where another miserable night was passed.

By daybreak next morning a company of Sappers and Miners were on their way up to Garnai with instructions to blast a track of some kind around the cliff. Half a dozen of the necessary "blasts" were fixed, the men retreating to safety when the fuses were ready for firing. The thunderous explosions that shook the mountains, echoing and re-echoing for minutes through hills and valleys, had results not expected by either our troops or the Thibetans.

As to the latter it appeared that they had constructed over a hundred "booby traps," two or three at every point under which it was calculated that we would pass, right up to Lingtu fort itself. Waiting by every trap were a dozen men in readiness to "spring" them when the signal was given.

They were ignorant of the shock effect of such heavy explosions, and the result was that the delicate balance of the traps got shock-free—every single one of them was let loose and the mountain roared with the noise of the avalanches in every direction, for not only was it the traps but dozens of the other parts of the hills came rushing down, adding to the awe-inspiring cataclysm. It was calculated afterwards that the Thibetans lost over four hundred men in the affair, our Sappers and Miners losing two men and the mule that carried up their gear. Even we, who were in comparative safety down in Jaluktso, became nervous on hearing the thunderous roar of the explosion followed by the earthquake effect of the mountain.

For the next fortnight our Pioneers and Sappers and Miners were hard at work cutting a passable road up to the fortifications above.

In the ordinary course of such operations it would be expected that the enemy would not be idle but would do their best to hinder the work as much as possible, but it

appears that in this case they, not understanding how the terrible disaster occurred, got frightened and retreated precipitately to Gnatong, but, of course, kept someone on watch at the fort

When they were convinced that a broken road or the loss of our men would not be sufficient to stop our advance, they resolved to return, being quite sure that we would never be able to drive them out of their "impregnable" stronghold—the "Hill of the Seven Winds"—protected by "Fardonga, the Demon of Keltso-ra"

The day of our advance was cold but bright, as the "Derbys" and Gurkhas took the lead supported by four companies of the Pioneers and four Mountain Battery guns. The ascent was a stiff struggle owing to the steep glacier-like hills over which the nailed boots of our men could not hold, while the Thibetans in their yak-hide soled moccasins had no trouble

It was very fortunate for us that the "booby traps" were all destroyed, otherwise our advance would have cost us dearly. As it was the Thibetans never ceased their attentions. Like mountain goats they sprang from rock to rock discharging their jingals and poisoned arrows from behind cover as they stubbornly retreated upwards. Our men had by then acquired hundreds of the yak-hide shields that served them well on this occasion, but still we had considerable losses. The last thousand feet had a gradient of about one in one which, with the ice and boulders being rolled down from above, made the ascent almost impossible. It looked as if the final assault with a united dash would not materialize, much to the disappointment of our Brigadier. So the guns were brought into action, but with little or no effect on the stone wall—ten feet thick—that surrounded the peak and protected the fort.

After an hour's firing and the wasting of many shells that for the most part fell far and wide over the summit, the Gurkhas offered to take off their boots and tackle the Thibetans at their own game. They drove them steadily upwards which permitted our supports to advance slowly until the whole force arrived under the stone-wall redoubt, and here the fight was a deadly hand-to-hand struggle, the Thibetans' long sword and dagger against the bayonet and kookri.

Just as darkness was about to fall our Gurkhas had clambered over the wall and very soon cleared the enemy from it, permitting the "Derbys" to gain a footing. Within half an hour the Thibetans, fighting to the last, were driven out of the old fort and were once more in retreat to Gnatong.

We had taken Lingtu certainly, but there did not seem to be much jubilation. We were all played out, to a man, dead tired, starved and cold, we lay about in whatever shelter we could find for the night.

Paddy Hogan found some kind of a cave into which we both crawled and in "full marching order" were asleep in less than ten minutes. We were lying on some rotten planks that covered what appeared to be a "ground floor" or cellar apartment in the cave, into which a dozen or so of the Derbyshires found a bottom entrance and went to sleep as we did.

About two o'clock in the morning the rotten boards broke and the pair of us, with a heap of rubbish, were precipitated on top of the fellows below. The shock, while sleeping, of the fall about eight feet was nothing to the "roughing" we got from the others.

By this time Paddy's personal appearance had slightly altered "for the better" in his own opinion. Everyone

had a beard, as in that icy climate shaving was out of the question. Paddy cultivated a veritable halo of fiery whiskers of which he was proud and which gave him an inexpressibly comic appearance, as the right side insisted on flowing backwards while the left stuck out in front, so that when he was coming towards you he appeared to be going in another direction. Long before the end of the campaign, Paddy, ever humorous and good-tempered, was a favourite with the whole force.

The "impregnable" fort was a rough, stone building, old and dilapidated, that was built during the reign of Gyalpa Dokpa about four hundred years before. As it was but a heap of filth and grime we would have nothing to do with it, instead, we constructed some rough shelters on the hill-side

A week later, having rested the troops and brought up supplies, we moved on to Gnatong, but with the exception of some desultory skirmishing nothing of importance occurred; the Tibetans had retreated to the Jalap-la—the famous Pass leading from Sikkim into the Chumbi valley.

For the next three months our force remained in Gnatong where we built quite a number of wooden houses and sheds, all within a strong, loopholed stockade of upright pine logs eight feet high on the outside, with a firing platform running all around inside. The troops, when not at work cutting and hauling pine logs, sawing wood and digging trenches, amused themselves at tobogganing and ice-sliding on the lake.

Life under the circumstances was becoming monotonous when a surprise was sprung on us.

Hogan and I had plenty of convoy work getting up as much stores as possible. He with the mules worked the

section between the Runghi Choo and Jaluktso while I with four hundred Bhutia coolies worked from Jaluktso up to Gnatong, as the coolies were better able to climb the frozen Lingtu than the mules, many of which were lost in the attempt

I was to start from Gnatong with my coolies at five o'clock in the morning to bring up a convoy of stores from Jaluktso The morning was very foggy when I asked the Gurkha sentry to open the gate for myself and coolies Half a dozen of the coolies that had just gone through, came dashing back shouting "*Peh-yu, Peh-yu*" (Thibetans, Thibetans) The sentry and I went outside to see what was the matter, we were met by four armed Thibetans just showing out of the fog who seemed as much surprised as we were One of them started to haul an arrow from the bamboo sheaf slung over his shoulder, but before he could clear it the sentry's rifle cracked and the man staggered back, the others drew their long swords I shot one with my revolver and wounded another, when the sentry shouted, "Come back, Sahib, many more coming" I was not slow to obey We were inside the barrier in a jiffy, the remainder of the guard closing the gate In less time than it takes to tell the alarm was given, more than three thousand Thibetans were all around the stockade Under cover of the dense fog, they had crept down from the hills with the intention of rushing the stockade before dawn

The first rush to reach the stockade was rather unfortunate, for through the broad water trench over a hundred became entangled in the submerged wires and were shot like rabbits, those behind crowding on until the trench was clogged with their dead and dying, over which others dashed and tried to scramble up the palisade, but were shot from the

loop-holes with the rifle muzzles in their faces, and still they strained and clawed at the logs like wild animals, climbing over the heaps of their own dead

Suddenly the loud, harsh braying of their long "lama" trumpets rang out, evidently a recall of some kind, for as quickly as they came out of the fog they disappeared into it again, leaving about three hundred dead and wounded all around the stockade and the pleasant job of burying their dead and treatment of their wounded to be undertaken by us

Their attempted surprise having failed so disastrously, the Thibetans seemed to have become disheartened, for they disappeared from the heights above us, not a man being seen for over a fortnight

Three weeks passed in peace and then we observed certain movements on the hill-tops that looked as if they were getting over their set-back at Gnatong. It was noted that their numbers were increasing daily and that they had begun to build *sangars* or breastworks on the hills above us. A number of *jungals* were also brought into action that kept up a constant and annoying fire into our stockade

Our General resolved to tempt them from their defences on which our mountain guns seemed to have no effect. Arrangements were made for the pretended evacuation of the stockade and retreat towards Shalumbi. Early in the morning dense columns of smoke began to rise inside the stockade that suggested the place had been fired. The watchers on the hills above were convinced that we had had enough of it and were retreating to India when they saw the troops march out with all their luggage and take the road back to Lingtu, but they did not suspect that four

guns of the Mountain Battery and half a regiment of Infantry remained concealed in the stockade

With wild yells of joy they leapt over their *sangars* and came tearing down from the hills with the idea of catching us in the open. They had reached the foot of the hills about eight hundred yards from the stockade and were deploying in their thousands to cut us off from the narrow defile that led out of the valley, when the four guns opened on them with shrapnel which at that range was productive of terrible slaughter. The surprise was complete.

In the meantime the troops that had marched out of the stockade turned about and at the double re-entered it.

The Thibetans left over five hundred dead and wounded on the hill-side as they bolted back to their *sangars*.

Another period of inactivity, and then—at last—they appeared to find out that they could make things unpleasant for us by getting behind our line of communication and cutting up our convoys, as the next little incident will illustrate.

About four o'clock one afternoon I was returning with my empty convoy to Jaluktso, our changing camp, to pick up loads brought from Rungli Choo by Hogan's mules. As usual I was well ahead of my crowd of Bhutias, carrying a carbine in the crook of my arm in hopes of getting a shot at a *kakar* (barking deer), when suddenly I heard a fusillade of shooting down below. That meant Jaluktso, about half a mile down by the path. There could be but one meaning to it—some kind of an attack on Hogan's convoy that was awaiting my arrival.

Whistling for my Gurkha escort, it did not take us long to get a view of the scene of action

A party of some fifty Thibetans had worked around the hills from Shalumbi and suddenly, from among the rocks, opened fire with their long forked jazails instead of their usual bows and deadly arrows, on Hogan and his men. Fortunately all the bags and boxes were stacked in readiness to be counted and taken over by me, and he with his escort, had taken cover behind the heaps of stores and were defending themselves bravely.

I halted my party at a sharp turn of the path overlooking the scene of action and observed that the Thibetans had also taken cover and were being directed by a giant of a man who seemed to know what he was about. As we were above we had a better view of them than Hogan's party. We opened fire on them at a range of about a hundred yards, our first volley accounting for half a dozen.

This unexpected diversion was a big surprise, and not knowing what might be following, half their number disappeared in the forest, the big fellow doing his best to hold them, when a shot from one of Hogan's escort settled the matter by bringing him down. A second volley from our side finished it, for with the exception of those lying about among the rocks all had disappeared. Eight were found to be dead and ten wounded, of which four died later.

The leader of the party, who had a bullet through his left shoulder, drew our attention as being rather an uncommon type of Thibetan. He stood fully six feet and eight inches in height, straight as a telegraph pole, with red hair, deep-blue eyes and complexion very little darker than my own, but nicely freckled. A splendid specimen of a young savage, for he did not appear to be more than twenty-six or twenty-seven

years old I had his wound washed and tied up the best I could for which he expressed his gratitude as explained by one of the Bhutias who spoke Thibetan He gave his name as Tamladula.

That night both convoys remained at Jaluktso where we entrenched ourselves inside a barrier made of bags and boxes of stores, though the big fellow with whom we shared our bully-beef assured us there would be no further attack without their leader—himself

Sitting by the fire behind the bags and talking with him through our Bhutia interpreter, I found it difficult, looking into his blue eyes and noting his colouring, to think him other than an European, and as I am now on the subject I might as well explain the man

About the year 1860 an Irish regiment was stationed on Senchal Hill not far from Darjeeling A certain sergeant by name Patrick Doolan happened to meet a Thibetan girl with whom he fell in love He deserted from his regiment one night when Sergeant-of-the-Guard, with all his uniform and arms, and went off into Thibet with his lady-love They had children, among them a son whose name was Tamladula, which when pronounced by an Irishman could easily resolve itself into plain *Tim Doolan*—so “ Tim ” it remained with us, or rather with Paddy Hogan who insisted on claiming him not only as a countryman but a relative of some kind, both being red-haired, freckled and blue-eyed They were inseparable to the end

Our force now advanced to the “ Boundary ” line, the true official demarcation that separated Sikkim from Thibet—the Jalap-la—sixteen thousand feet high Arriving in sight of the Pass, we were surprised to see the formidable defences in the shape of zig-zag six-foot stone breastworks, five feet deep, that they had built along the crest from the lower

slopes of the Pemberingo on the east to the abutment of the Nathu-la on the west, in addition to lines of stone *sangars* one above the other over the face of the mountain

As soon as it was dark the Gurkha regiment and two mountain guns quietly left camp and, making a wide detour towards the east, worked their way through ravines and over hills towards the Pugar heights. It snowed heavily during the night which, though hiding the movement from the Thibetan scouts, made it extremely difficult for our men. About eight o'clock next morning the General ordered the advance of the whole force in skirmishing order, the 32nd Pioneers under the command of Col. Bromhead on the right, the 23rd on the left with the Derbyshires in the centre, and a couple of guns with each. Getting to convenient range, the guns opened fire at once and in a very short time the nearest line of *sangars* was cleared of the enemy and promptly taken possession of by sections of the regiments. It was during the struggle for one of the *sangars* that Col. Bromhead lost one hand and was otherwise badly wounded by a Thibetan swordsman.

After some consultation among the chiefs, about two thousand of the enemy assembled under the redoubt and with demoniacal yells dashed down the hill in a wild charge, their long swords flashing, with the intention of sweeping our men out of the *sangars* we had occupied. Their movement was noted and preparations were made by our guns for their reception.

The charging horde was still six hundred yards above us when they were met by half-a-dozen shrapnel shells bursting among them in quick succession, scattering them far and wide, and before they could recover from their bewilderment other shells followed creating such havoc among them that their downward charge melted away.

Those that escaped the hail of shrapnel were very soon scrambling to the safety of the big redoubt Meanwhile our Infantry doggedly continued their upward thrust, taking line after line of *sangars* until at last they were within range of the big stone stockade, upon which neither shell nor rifle fire could make any impression, while the thousands of Thibetans behind it with their jazails, jingals, arrows and hurtling boulders kept our men at some distance, when suddenly from the heights two thousand feet above a couple of shells came screaming down—with what to us sounded like a yell of encouragement—and burst behind the stockade, right among the thousands who thought themselves quite safe and invincible Following the shells came volley after volley of rifle fire from our gallant little Gurkhas, then a continuous barrage of shells and bullets It was too much for the Thibetans In wild, confused crowds they broke and fled down the northern slopes of the Pass, still pursued by those terrible shells from above

And now I must tell of our little Paddy One of the *sangars* being held by three men of the Derbyshires was in danger of being attacked by a number of the enemy, who seeing the weakness of the defenders were stealthily advancing from behind some rocks with the intention of recapturing it and disposing of the three men in it Hogan, Emmit and myself seeing the danger, dashed across the snow towards the *sangar* Hogan, the lightest and best runner, was some fifteen yards in front when, out of a snow-hummock, a big Thibetan suddenly stood up and let fly an arrow That was the end of poor Paddy The arrow entered his left ear with such force that the barbed point protruded on the right side of his head The big Thibetan, too intent on his shot, had no time to notice us behind, and so paid for his negligence Paddy was scarcely on the ground when my revolver called the Thibetan to account.

Next day we buried poor Paddy in a grave of ice, cut from the frozen slope of the Pemberingo Hill.

The Tibetans were cleared out of Sikkim and that was the end of the campaign, for although we followed them as far as Rendzong in the Chumbi Valley and even captured their "Base Depot Camp" there was no more fighting until fifteen years later, when we were forced to teach them another lesson by entering their country and proceeding to Lhasa—their sacred city.

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## THE BATTLE OF THE PANJKORA

After our great adventure and the spectacular crossing of the Swat river and the defeat of the combined forces of the Swat and Bajaur tribesmen, the 2nd and 3rd Brigades under Generals Waterfield and Gatacre swept up through the valley of Uch and onward over the Katagola Pass and the Laram range towards the Panjkora river, thirty miles further north, where we found ourselves up against the most formidable obstacle that lay in the path of our Force as we strained onward by forced marches to the relief of the little garrison of Indian troops with half a dozen British Officers that in the early part of 1895 were besieged by the tribes for months in the primitive old fort of Chitral, far away beyond the Frontier of India. As with the Swat river the Panjkora must be crossed, notwithstanding its reputation of being impassable owing to its fierce torrent of swirling waters and the fact that fifteen thousand fanatical tribesmen holding a strong position were waiting to welcome us on the other side.

Immediately on reaching the river, our troops took up position along the rocky bank and promptly came under fire of the enemy, hidden among the low hills on the Bajaur side, but thanks to the cover afforded by the rocky nature of the ground, little damage was done.

The immediate object now was to cross the river. Fording was altogether impossible on account of the depth and the force of the current, so some other means had to be sought for, and here again it was found that the checkered experiences of a Frontier Scout could provide useful results. It was while talking of the difficulty with one of the Staff Officers while crouching in the darkness under a rock for

shelter from the drenching rain, as well as from the tribesmen's bullets, that I thought of the plan. That young man went off and told the Brigade Major, who sent for me, with the result that I immediately sought my old friend and companion in many strange enterprises, Duffadar Wali Daud, a man of the Akha Khel, who at one time held the reputation of being the cleverest horse-thief on the Border and well acquainted with river, hill, village and ravine from Quetta in the west to Lutko in the east.

I found him comfortably squatting behind a rock with a mule paulin over him.

"*Shenaz?*" he repeated as he offered me a share of his paulin. "Of course, Sahib. A dozen if need be. Oh yes, in the usual manner. It would not be wise to disturb people for a little thing like that. I know Alarzai, the village up there, very well indeed. Once—when my business took me—"

"Alright, Wali," I cut in—"but let us get to this business now. You get our things ready while I go and arrange matters with the Sappers."

Half an hour later, as two nondescript Bajauris we crept through the rocks, and under cover of the rain and darkness started off in the direction of Alarzai that was situated close to the river two miles higher up.

As the people of those river villages have constant use for the *shenaz* they keep them usually stored in a shed close to the river so as always to be in readiness when needed.

The *shenaz* is the cured skin of a bullock made into a peculiar shaped bag that, when inflated, is used as a means for crossing the most rapid rivers, and even for fast travelling with the current when necessary.

We had now to find the shed without attracting the attention of the village watchman or the dogs, and it was the dogs that nearly spoiled our business. We had actually succeeded in reaching the shed when a wretched mongrel somewhere in among the houses began to make a row. Someone called to someone else and then we caught the sound of two people talking and coming in our direction.

"Come, Sahib," whispered Wali, "up on the shed," and with a hoist behind I found myself lying flat on the top and in a moment Wali beside me. The two men, grumbling, splashed by in the mud, right under us, and apparently returned to their shelter, the dog still barking until a sharp yelp from it told us that the owner had kicked it. We remained where we were for ten minutes or so, then slipped down, and in a short time were the possessors of two good *shenaz*. Thanks to the rain that kept people indoors, we had no trouble getting back to where I had arranged to meet the Sappers, who thoroughly understood what was to be done.

Having inflated both *shenaz* and lashed them together for greater safety we took the end of a long log-line and entered the river. As we worked our way diagonally across, necessarily on account of the current, the Sappers with their end of the line followed along the bank until we landed on the opposite side at a point where there were a lot of rocks and huge boulders.

*Shenaz* riding is rather a tricky accomplishment that needs much experience, if through carelessness or want of knowledge in the correct use of your legs and arms, you would find yourself underneath and the *shenaz* riding on top, in which case you would find it very difficult to get right again, and even then you would be half drowned.

In a short time we had hauled half a dozen strands of telegraph wire across and made them fast to the rocks, but permitting them to lie just under the surface of the water. This much done, we, carrying our *shenaz*, made another journey up the bank on the side we then were until we came to where the annual collection of timber logs was lying a mile or so above Alarzai. We rolled a couple of dozen into mid-stream by which they were quickly carried down and caught by the wires, where the Sappers who took charge of them very soon had a "travelling" raft constructed that was pulled back and forth by a wire rope and pulleys. By this raft the Guides regiment was carried across in small parties during the night and quite unknown to the enemy. They quickly established themselves in an entrenched *zariba* on the bank of the river, but soon after daybreak the situation became known to the tribes who were not slow to make a counter-move, which took the shape of a veritable mountain of logs lashed together hurtling down with the torrent that tore our rafting arrangement to pieces, a calamity that left the Guides completely cut off from our main body and marooned on the enemy's side of the river, but which in no way daunted their Commander who without any hesitation proceeded to carry out the orders given him by our Chief, Sir Robert Lowe.

Leaving two companies to hold the *zariba*, he set out with the remainder to dispose of some armed villages that harboured large numbers of the enemy that were persistently "sniping" across the river at our working parties. The Guides made a wide sweep towards the west, burned the hostile villages and drove out hundreds of the enemy that were hiding among the rocks as "snipers."

Having carried out that job satisfactorily, the Colonel thought it advisable to retire to the *zariba*, but a retreat when fighting those tribesmen always means trouble

About noon, two dense columns of the enemy were observed coming down the Jandol valley, one column on the right bank of the Jandol river and the other on the left. The first reached the summit of an elevated spur and determinedly attacked the Guides as they retired. The second column, sweeping down the valley, prepared to charge them in flank, hoping to cut them off from their *zariba*, but, yard by yard, the companies retired alternately, down the ridge they were following, fiercely attacked on three sides, yet steadily firing volley after volley, the well directed fire of the Mountain battery from the east side of the river greatly assisting the retirement. Meanwhile the two companies that were left to hold the *zariba* dashed out to meet the second column, which ignoring them concentrated all its endeavours to carry out its intention. And now the whole of the 2nd Brigade with its Mountain battery and a Maxim gun were quickly moved to a more suitable position on the east side of the Panjkora (the Guides were on the west side) and effectively helped the retreat, but at the foot of the ridge the Guides had to cross several hundred yards of level ground, waist high in green barley, and then wade across the Jandol river (about four feet deep) and make their way through more barley-fields to their *zariba*.

Just as the regiment left the last spur, the Commander of the Guides, Colonel Battye, fell mortally wounded, and died as he would prefer it—at the head of his famous regiment after nigh on thirty years' distinguished service with it. It was on crossing the open ground that the fierce, wild bravery of the enemy became more brilliantly evident. Standard bearers with reckless gallantry would rush to certain destruction, falling within ten yards of the Guides' rifles. Others, devoid of all fear, having used up all their cartridges rushed forward with chunks of rock hurling them at our men and courting instant death. They were like

hounds on their prey. Nothing could deter them or check the savage fury of their assaults. Even after the Guides had crossed the stream and the enemy was under a severe flank fire from the Gordon Highlanders and the Scottish Borderers, they dashed into the stream where each man stood out clear as a target, and attempted to grapple with our men, but not one of them got across, and the stream was clogged with their dead and dying.

Fire now slackened all round as the Guides gained their *zariba*, on which they immediately set to work to strengthen

Preparations were now begun for defence against a night attack as to which, knowing the customs and temper of the tribes and the circumstances that existed with regard to the isolation of the Guides, there was not much doubt, and it was just there that we, my old Duffadar and I, again proved ourselves useful.

During the day, efforts were made to reconstruct the raft, but anyone approaching the timber logs was immediately sniped from the wilderness of rock on the hills all around, among which dozens of sharp-shooters were hidden.

There was great anxiety as night fell, for the enemy being in such numbers and in such a favourable position, would make a determined charge during the darkness and simply overwhelm the Guides in their weakly constructed entrenchments.

Such an attack was in reality planned and was just on the point of being launched when—*other things happened*

Having arranged matters with the Brigade Major and assisted by the darkness and a heavy curtain of rain, Wali Daud and myself, with our deflated *shenaz* and a few other necessaries comfortably packed, stole quietly away from the Culum and, making a wide detour, passed the





NOT SO BAD AS IT APPEARS

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village of Alarzai and came to the river again, a mile further north and far above the timber logs around which the snipers were hidden. Hidden among the rocks, we inflated our *shenaz* and again crossed the river, and after an hour's creeping and crawling through wet barley crops, dodging among rocks and ravines, we gained our objective which was a deep hollow behind the enemy's position. Here I became a badly wounded man. Having tied up my head in my dirty old puggri and a bloodstained rag around my knee, while hanging on to old Wali's shoulder for support, we hobbled painfully to a spot where others in somewhat the same plight were sitting and lying about. There we rested for a while and talked of the day's fighting, both of us vaunting our prowess and in vivid tones expressed our intentions regarding what we would do to the "cursed Kafar dogs" later on. After a rest we again started our quiet hobbling towards the central section where we had ascertained the principal Maliks were gathered. When near enough to hear all that was being planned for the night, we laid down and as the others did indulged in and mingled our muffled groaning and cursing with the others. In less than an hour we had gathered all details of the intended attack.

At about 2 a.m.—the darkest hour of night (or morning?) the attacking force—eight thousand fanatics—moved off towards the point of assembly, a low hill to the north, not more than five hundred yards from the Guards' *zariba*. We had no difficulty in following, but at some little distance behind—advisedly, in view of later events. When I observed that the spot fixed on was reached and the thousands were halted to make their final preparations, I quietly drew my revolver and fired *two* shots in quick succession, a second's pause and then *one*. It was the signal we had arranged with the Brigade Major. Where shooting such as sniping was heard very often, no one would take

much notice of mine—but it was the *order* in which they were fired that gave the signal. Wali and I did not await developments but took to our heels as fast as our legs would carry us in the direction we had planned to take where there was safety. We were allowed just three minutes and then it occurred. A muffled puff and a couple of glorious star-shells with a most astonishing brilliancy shot up from our guns across the river and burst right over the heads of the wildly scared tribesmen, showing up their faces in a peculiarly weird and ghastly light, but when in addition, and while the magically brilliant balls of coloured light slowly descended, every Mountain gun and rifle in both Brigades opened fire and simply deluged them with a torrent of shot and shell, it was more than they could stand. In less than two minutes all but a thousand or so that were left lying on the hill, had disappeared in every direction.

In ordinary war those tribesmen are the bravest of the brave as proved in a hundred battles, but against the powers of *shaitan* (the devil)—as expressed by the prisoners we had taken—no ordinary man could stand. “Star-shell” was beyond their comprehension.

As far as the opposition to crossing the Panjkora was concerned we had no further trouble beyond the usual sniping. The tribes of Bajaur and Swat had enough of it there and were in full retreat towards Miankilai, the capital of Bajaur. Our losses were considerable the day previous, but the tribes’ loss in killed and wounded was very heavy indeed.

After the retreat of the enemy no time was lost in arranging for the “crossing” by the Force. Not only were more rafts made but our Field-engineers got to work at once and a temporary swing bridge was thrown across

the river at its narrowest point in an astonishing short time whereby the troops, guns and all transport mules were passed over and the double marches taken up once more

When Wali Daud and I were at a safe distance from the firing of our own troops that I knew would quickly follow the star-shells, we lost no time in making our way to a place of safety in a certain deep and rocky ravine we had previously located. Our intention was to remain hidden there until the flying tribesmen had all disappeared, but we knew them too well to take it for granted that we had completely fooled them and got clear away without being observed by anyone after I had fired the signal shots that gave the position of their attacking force to our gunners. We were to learn otherwise.

We had settled down in our hiding place among the rocks—old Wali Daud in his own selected hole at a distance of about ten yards from mine. There was no need for conversation between us but every need for caution and remaining on the alert. An hour's resting in one position proved to me that the rock against which I was trying to make myself comfortable was not quite as soft as I could wish; I very quietly crept off to another position a couple of yards away. Having settled myself, revolver in hand, I was beginning to think that after all we might venture out and try to get back to the river, when from the lip of the ravine above a shot rang out that in that reverberant ravine sounded like the crash of a cannon and a bullet smacked against the very rock I had just left. Looking up quickly I caught a glimpse of the head and shoulders of a man clear against the sky-line, and having no doubt but that it was the man who fired at me, I considered it due to me to return the compliment. My shot seemed to have been effective, for the fellow clambered to his feet unsteadily, wavered about a second and lurched

down among the rocks I called Wali Daud to attend to him while I quickly climbed up the side of the ravine to meet any others that might have accompanied him A quick look about over the rocky bank satisfied me that there was another, for although on account of the darkness I could not see very far, I distinctly heard the sound of someone running away To let him get clear away would never have done! That would very soon be productive of trouble for Wali and I Not hesitating a moment, I dashed after the fellow, guided only by the sound of his footsteps which would cease occasionally as if the fellow stopped to listen, then on again What concerned me as I ran was that I thought I heard the sound of another shot from the ravine before I had got fifty yards from it I could not quite understand it for I knew that Wali Daud never used his gun except in a tight corner, he had a preference for the long *pishkauze* or Khyber knife I did not know whether to keep on after the fugitive or return to see what was wrong in the ravine, but thinking there would be more danger from my man getting away than the other, I kept on after him At last the runaway got clear of the rocks through which he was twisting, and getting out on a bit of open ground gave me an indistinct sight of his figure I fired at him, but must have missed for he kept on running. Again I fired, but with the same result It was too dark to take an aim I put up the revolver and trusted to my legs, and so we kept on until he turned to the right front and made for another cluster of rocks, into the shadows of which he dashed I followed close behind him, but after a few twistings in and out I lost the sound of his footsteps completely I climbed on to a low rock and stood listening for a sound I caught a sound sure enough, but it was not the sound I expected, but the sound of heavy breathing—or as it seemed gasping—and it was at the bottom of the rock on which I was standing Evidently the fellow was played out and

could not get any further I jumped down and threw myself on him, gripping his arms to prevent his using his knife—then I jumped back—for "Khazah yum" (I am a woman !) came from the figure on the ground

"A woman !" I exclaimed in astonishment "Get up" She scrambled to her feet and I could see that she was dressed as a man with puggri complete

Assuring myself that she had not been wounded by one of my shots and that she had only her knife, which I took charge of—"Come along," I ordered, and started back for the ravine where I had left Wali Daud

As we progressed through the rocks the woman asked about the man who was with her My reply was that I was not sure, but that he was probably dead We did not speak again until we got to the ravine and found Wali sitting on a low rock rolling a rag of some kind round his arm

"Hello ! Wali," I cried, "what is wrong ? "

"Oh, not much," he replied, "just a scratch on my arm, but who—" ?

The woman—no way frightened or excited—replied for herself and in turn asked where Quadar Din was ?

"Down there," was Wali's laconic reply with a careless downward wave of his free hand The woman nodded and quietly made her way down through the rocks After a word with Wali I followed and was in time to see her undo the waist cloth of the figure on the ground and take something from its folds Before she could hide it, I caught her arm, and after a short struggle took possession of a leather case of the kind in common use with all Pathans The woman just sat down and muttered the one word "Kismat !" But I particularly noticed that she did not show much concern or regret about the dead man.

As to Wali Daud and the man left with him, it appeared that the man—a Bajauri—was only wounded when he staggered into the ravine, and on seeing Wali approach, he raised his gun and shot him in the arm. Before he could do any further mischief Wali disposed of him in his usual manner.

Leaving the dead man as he was, I took the woman up to where Wali was on the look-out for any further visitors. I wanted to have an understanding as to what to do with her. She was about twenty-five years of age, tall and well built, and like all those mountain women had excellent features. When we questioned her as to the man who had followed us when we hurriedly left before the guns had opened fire and as to who she was and how she happened to be with the fighting men, her explanation was as follows—

"Four years ago I lived in the village of Sard-Koh with my husband, Gaffoor Ali, who was in the service of the Khan of Dir. When he went to the *jung* (war) against the *Gurd* of Swat, I accompanied him as good wives should who love their husbands. He was killed in the fight, after which I was on my way back to my people, the Akha Khel (I looked at Wali Daud, but there was no movement from him), when that man who lies dead down there, took me by force and has kept me in his house since then. We had nothing to do with yesterday's fight but were on our way from Mundia with papers that Quadar Din was taking to someone beyond the snow mountain of the Lawori when he would deliver the papers he would receive a large sum of money. Quadar Din is dead, but as I was in need of money to get back to my people I would carry those papers myself. That is all, but I am not grieved that Quadar Din is dead. He took me by force and held me by threats. It is good that he is dead. We came to this place on our way, and

not wishing to get among the fighting men, he decided to hide over there for the night. You followed soon after and Quadar Din thought you were sent after him to steal his papers for which he was to get much money. That is why he tried to kill you."

"What is your name?" Wali asked.

"Fathawa," she replied.

"Well, Fathawa," I said, "if we let you go now, what will you do?"

"No," broke in Wali, "we cannot let her go now. She knows we have the papers, and very soon the person in Mundia who gave them will also know, with the result that a hundred mounted men will be on our track in a short space of time."

This was strange talk on old Wali's part, for he well knew that by next afternoon—if the way was clear of the enemy—we would be back with our Column up the Panjkora.

"Listen to me, my friend" The woman was speaking to Wali—"By your accent and the way you speak our language, I am sure that you are of the Akha Khel and a countryman of my own. You have those papers, keep them carefully and take them to the place that I know. I will not go away but stay with you, until you get that money that I trust you as a countryman and a friend to help me return to my people—your people."

Well, this was a stunner! Now, what on earth were we to do with her? The only thing for it was to take her back with us to the Panjkora and get the political people to send her back over the Malakand or to Peshwar.

As there was no more to be said, I sat with my back to a rock and dozed, while Wali and the woman talked in low voices of the Akha Khel

When daylight came the first thing I did was to open the leather case and read the letter, that was in Persian

Its contents surprised me considerably and made me very anxious to get back to the Panjkora with the important information it contained

It was "from the hand" of Umra Khan, the Chief of Jandol, to Shere Afzul, the "pretender" to the Mehtarship, who at the time was directing the tribes who were besieging the Chitral fort with our troops shut up in it

The papers gave full details of the number of fighting men he was sending to assist Shere Afzul and the number already there, and many other instructions as to the conduct of the siege. Also full details of the British Force that was on its way to relieve the Fort, but that he, Umra Khan, would prevent their advance by many ambushes at Kokala, Mirga and the Lawori, and a lot of other important information that proved there were some spies among the personnel of our Columns

While I was seated behind the rock absorbed in the contents of the leather case, Wali and the woman Fathawa had gone down to a small stream that rippled along at the bottom of the ravine. When I saw them they appeared to be on very friendly terms. she was bathing his wounded arm, and having done the job bound it up with a strip of cloth from her own puggri. When that operation came to an end she drew a small bundle from under her shoulder shawl, and handed us a chapattie each that we were very glad to get as we had neither food nor sleep for many hours.

Then climbing up to where the dead Quadar Ali lay, took off his puggri and gave it to me, saying it was much better than mine, which she threw down by the body

"Now," she said, "let us make a start on our journey. The sooner we deliver the letter the sooner will we be able to get to our own country"

Emerging from the ravine soon after, Fathawa carrying the dead man's gun and cartridges, we, after spying out the surroundings and seeing no one in view, started on our pretended journey towards Kokala, but our intention was to work round in a wide semi-circle towards the north, where we had hidden our *shenaz* the night before, when one of us would swim down the river to where our men were reconstructing the rafts and have a few of the Guides to escort the others in, otherwise they would most likely be shot by our own men, but our little plan was shattered before it came to anything

We three were climbing up the southern face of a bracken-covered hill, I in front and the other two fifty paces behind. I topped the hill and came face to face with the leader of a band of some fifty well-armed Swatties—the friends and allies of the Bajauris! One had to think quickly. no use to try and run, I would be shot before I got twenty yards, so with a cheerful "*Stera musha*" I greeted them. They returned the greeting, when questions were asked. While talking with the leader, the others came to a halt and my two companions came up. My story was that after the fight the night before most everyone was making for their homes as there did not seem to be any further use for us our home was at Kokala towards which we were now going

By then Wali and Fathawa had come up and after salutations joined in the conversation. The woman, with

a most consummate aplomb, now spoke, and, well educated in the diplomacy of pretence as I was, I really felt inclined to slap her on the shoulder and cry *shabash* (bravo!). Her acting was superb

"I am—or I was," she began, with a tremor in her soft voice—"the wife of Quadar Ali, a good soldier of Umra Khan—who—last night died fighting as a soldier should when Allah the Great is pleased to call him. Now I am a lone widow and my heart is as water. He was a good husband, kind and true, and he loved me well." Here her low voice broke and tears ran down her cheeks. Good Lord! What an actress! Continuing as she turned towards Wali—

"This is Wordha Khan, own brother of my dear dead husband, who is now taking me back to his own home, where under the kindness of his wife and family I may pass the remaining days of my lonely life until I have the bliss of joining my man once more under the shadow of the Great Allah"—and her face was burned in two trembling hands

I looked at Wali Daud, but his face was as expressionless as the rock beside him

"Well," said the Swat, turning to me, "and who are you?"

"Just a neighbour, also of Kokala, and a friend of Wordha Khan—my name is Alim Rahman. We both were in the fighting front yesterday. I was lucky, but Quadar Ali was killed and Wordha Khan was shot in the arm as you see. But pardon me, if I am mistaken, I failed to see any of your people there."

"No," he replied, with what I thought was an unpleasant snap in his voice—"Sirdar Raza Mohamed sent us instructions that were not received until it was too late. I am now on my way to Miankilai to meet him in connection

with a force to be sent to Shere Afzul. Your story, as you tell it to me, may be true, but as I am in doubt I must take all three of you with me to the Fort where the Sirdar himself may hear what you have to say about the fight "

This was not at all pleasant, but how could we refuse ! Miankilai was three long days' journey from where we were, but would not be altogether out of the road to Kokala

" Alright," I cheerfully agreed " It is a long time since I was there and I will be pleased to see the place again "

The order to start was now given by the leader. There was no regular order of march ever followed by the tribes, everyone jogged along as he pleased, as long as they kept fairly well together, so naturally Wali, the woman and I drifted along together

Fathawa's tears had dried—but not altogether—that would be *too soon* after such a heart-broken exhibition. Drawing close to me and speaking in the lowest possible key, she whispered—

" Alim Rahman, whatever happens, do not lose that leather case with the papers. Night and day keep it tied next your skin. Remember as long as you have that all will be well. These Swats are the lowest sect of thieves in the world. The man we will meet in Miankilai is the trusted brother of Umra Khan and will believe what I tell him. We will get away with honour even. Now I will tell my *warorka* (brother-in-law)," and with a sly, mischievous look in her big black eyes sidled up to old Wali

For the following three days our party tramped through the hills, the nights being spent in open bivouac, as there were no villages on the route we took until the evening of our last day's march when we arrived at a small place—

too insignificant to be called a village—a few miles from the fort of Miankulai Fathawa was accommodated by an old couple who showed her every kindness The remainder camped about the place the best way we could, but there was plenty for all in the way of food

In conversation with the Headman, the Swat leader gained certain information regarding Sirdar Raza Mohamed that did not seem to give him much comfort In the first place, he was wild on account of their reverse the day before and did not fail to express many bitter comments when any allusion was made about the failure of the Swat assistance that had been promised and on which the Sirdar had greatly relied to create a diversion by attacking our Columns from the rear, on the east side of the river

About 2 o'clock next morning the Sirdar commanded the presence of the Swat leader and his small contingent On entering the courtyard of the Fort, they were kept waiting an hour which did not add to the leader's happiness At last the Sirdar, a very tall man of commanding presence but of a savage disposition, without a word of salutation or any pretence of friendship addressed the Swat in a loud harsh voice—

“ What is your name ? ”

“ Mir Faruk, Lord,” was the reply.

“ What is your object in coming here with these few men ? ”

“ Lord, our Chieftain—Rafai Malook Ahsan—sends by my unworthy hand this letter”—presenting it—“ in which he explains the cause as to why the five thousand men promised did not put in an appearance in accordance with the arranged plan of battle ”

The Sirdar took the letter and read it through in silence, then sat as if buried in thought, seemingly not of the most pleasant, for a long time. Suddenly he seemed to wake to the surrounding and looking about him, his eye fell on Mir Faruk, the Swat

"Well," he shouted at him, "have you anything else to say? If not——"

"Lord," replied the Swat, "on our way hither, three days since, we came upon these three persons not far from the battlefield. They tell a story, the truth of which is very doubtful, so I insisted on bringing them here that you might in person question them."

"Why were you doubtful?"

"Hazdar, I had my suspicions that they were but *budzat gujan* (despoilers of the dead and wounded after a battle) and as such deserve *katal* (execution)." Before the man could say more Fathawa suddenly stepped forward and with both hands on the breast exclaimed—"Hazaar-i-Kalantr (Great Lord), if you would condescend to grant the most abased and miserable of your slaves but three minutes' conversation—in private—I feel sure your *aqal-i-Khuda* (God-given wisdom) will be directed to the *roshan-i-insaf* (light of justice)"

The Sirdar looked steadily at her for a moment, then waved his hand, when everyone having moved off to some distance, he signed Fathawa to approach. After a couple of minutes' low converse, she turned and beckoned to me. When near the *masnad* (seat of honour) she held out her hand towards me which I understood as a request for the leather case. Having extracted it from where it was concealed under my clothes, I handed it to her

without a word She quickly opened it and handed the papers to the Sirdar.

While perusing them he looked at us once or twice, then suddenly addressing me—

“ You ! Who are you ? What is your name ? ”

“ Alim Rahman, Lord, of the village of Kokala and a friend of Wordha Khan ”—pointing to Wali

“ Can you read Persian ? ” was the next question he sharply fired at me, with his eyes fixed on mine

“ No, Lord,” I replied, “ I cannot read anything, but I like to look at pictures ”

Signaling me to stand back, he turned to his reading again

At last he finished reading and remained in thought for some minutes Then slowly and carefully folding the papers and returning them to the case, he handed it to Fathawa, and again entered into a long conversation with her eventually signaling to a *munshi* (clerk) close by, gave him an order The *munshi* immediately filled in a paper and handed to the Sirdar with a low bow The Sirdar took a pen, and putting his signature to the paper, handed it to Fathawa Then turning to the assembled crowd said in a loud voice that all might hear—

“ These people have my permit to travel—where they please Let it be understood that they may not be interfered with in any way, but on the contrary they are to be given food and shelter when needed ”

Here he made us a sign of dismissal, which we were not slow to take

As we went out through the big gate of the courtyard, a well dressed man addressed Fathawa with a bow of respect and deference

"*Khatum-kalan* (Great Lady), if there be any little service I can do for you, please command me"

"Yes," she promptly replied, "I require a good basket of food as we have to travel far"

The man bowed himself off, and very soon returned with a shoulder-basket full of excellent food from the Sirdar's own kitchen. Wali took possession of it and we were quickly on our way, and as we travelled, Fathawa gave us a full account of the interview and its result

While in Mundia she had learned that Raza Mohamed, the Sirdar, was a great favourite of his brother, the Great Chieftain, and would give his life to further all his aims so when he had read that letter he had but one thought and that was to pass it on to its destination without delay or hindrance. Fathawa informed him that when the Swat arrested them she would not tell him about the papers as she could not trust him or anyone else. On this he commended her strongly

Three days later we were making our way through the hills that lay between Mundia and the Panjkora, for Wali Daud and I had no intention whatever of going towards Kokala and the Lawori, but twisted through the hills in such a manner that Fathawa did not know where we were, but we knew alright. And now when overtopping the last of the hills before emerging on to the open plain of Idaki, the sight that met our eyes was cheering—a long line of horses, mules and troops moving northwards towards Mundia at a great pace. Now was the time that Wali Daud's eloquence was to be put to the test, and moving off to a

hundred yards or so left him to it, while with a piece of white cloth (that I had recently washed and kept for a purpose such as the present) tied to a stick, I was signalling to the passing troops. Fifteen minutes later an officer and half a dozen lancers of the Guides Cavalry came galloping over the plain towards our hill.

Turning back to Wali and Fathawa, I noticed that they were on good terms and chatting pleasantly.

All was well. She was now assured of her early return to the Akha Khel and her own people with the full assistance of Wali—her countryman.

Two hours later those momentous documents that came into our possession so fatefully were in the hands of our Commander, and were the ultimate cause of Umra Khan's undoing.

That same evening I bid good-bye to Fathawa—a splendid woman of the Frontier—and—what a splendid actress!



